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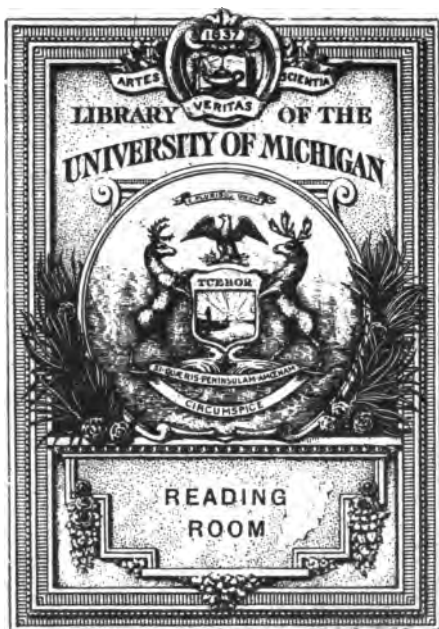
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# ELEMENTS OF LITERARY CRITICISM

BY

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## PREFACE

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THE real value of literature lies in the fact that it is a source of pleasure, and it is most to be desired that we enjoy it unconsciously, as the Scotch enjoy the poems of Robert Burns, without any thought of elements, or qualities, or reasons. But that is possible only where an entire community is possessed of a love for poetry that has grown up among them, with which all have been familiar from earliest childhood. We have very little folk-poetry and have inherited a vast literature which we have not produced. Study and reflection add greatly to our appreciation of this. I have, therefore, examined some of the most plain and obvious qualities of some of the work of a few of the great English writers, with the idea that an intelligent understanding of the simplest reasons why admired writings are ad-

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mirable might lead to love of them for themselves and less unfruitful regard for them on traditionary authority.

I may add that the book has grown out of talks with students and is written for learners.

C. F. J.

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## ELEMENTS OF LITERARY CRITICISM

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### CHAPTER I

LIKE all words the meaning of which is so extended as to embrace a complicated series of phenomena, the word Literature is very much changed in extent and significance by its qualifying adjective. Thus, if we should say, "The Literature of Chemistry," or "The Literature of Geology," we should mean all that has been written on these sciences. If we say "Patristic Literature," we should include all controversial or doctrinal writing by members of the Christian Church up to, perhaps, the eighth century. If, however, we should use the term "English Literature," we should by no means wish to include all that has been written or printed in the English language. We should exclude books written about chemistry or geology almost entirely. We should exclude all law reports and all mathematical works, all legislative documents—in fact, all writings where the registration of

fact or the conveying of information was the sole object sought and the sole end attained. A book must be something more than a record of fact, or a reasoning on fact, expressed in the English language, to bring it within the definition of English literature. It must possess artistic form. But mere statements of fact may be invaluable to the historian, or even to the poet, who must base himself on fact if he wishes to construct such a presentation of fact as may worthily be called a poem, though they are not literature. They are only the raw material of literature—frequently, indeed, very stimulating to the imagination because they leave so much to it.

Form, then, is the criterion of literature. Literature, like language, depends primarily on the original instinct of the human mind towards communication, for all the finer shades of thought and all the subtler relations of things can be communicated only through the artistic form. Nor can noble or complex emotion be conveyed in any other medium. Literary form gives language a scope and reach which it does not possess as language. Furthermore, although the primary motive of the writer does not affect the literary value of the product—he may wish, for instance, merely to entertain—there is in our race a bond between the love of beauty and the love of reality or truth, so that what is put in

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the literary form is almost invariably instructive in the highest sense and moral in the highest sense. It may not add definitely to our knowledge of historic fact or of natural phenomena, but it excites a new interest in men and nature and enables us to understand that both are mysterious. There is no necessary connection between literary form and righteousness; but literature does not lend itself to the service of evil as readily as other art forms—notably music and painting—do. It has a moral aptitude and a dignity greater than any it could derive merely from its nature as a supplementary language of great refinement.

The ability to cast what he writes into an artistic form is part of the personality of the writer, and, like all elements of the personality, is colored by the general notions of those with whom it communicates and the medium through which it expresses itself. The literary form of the eighteenth century is quite different from that of to-day. The literary power is subtle, rare, sympathetic, and indefinable. Probably the most important part of it lies in that portion of the mind of whose workings the subject is entirely unconscious. Possibly all men possess it in a limited degree. A few possess it in such a degree as to be creative, and a very few possess it in such a degree that we are tempted to say that other men do not possess it at all. If it is a

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common possession of the great body of humanity, it is usually embryonic or dormant. If the men who possess it write, what they write has the literary quality as distinguished from correctness: it has something, too, which distinguishes it from the work of other men. If the men who possess it in its highest development write, what they write becomes literature of the highest quality, and it would seem that such men must write—that the power must energize. There have been but three such illuminated intellects in our era: Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, unless, indeed, we should include Hugo and Tolstoi. It is usual to say that such men possess genius, which is an indirect way of saying that we cannot account for the difference between them and other men. There is hardly a generation which does not produce some literary artist of a lower order, though some periods are vastly more fruitful than others.

As said before, this artistic power is indefinable, since its effects are all that we can see or measure in any way. By comparing its manifestation in different men, some of its elements may be distinguished, but the residue, the motive power, is very likely the most important and essential part. We talk about literary powers. What binds these powers together? The human mind is not separable into parts except on some barren metaphysical hypothesis. What a mind

produces is permanent and can be examined. This product is found to possess certain characteristic qualities. We say that these qualities—unity, music, wit, etc.—are referable to certain powers of the author's mind, although we have no right to say that the mind possesses powers or parts at all. When we speak of the different mental powers—imagination, argumentative powers, etc.—although, as far as we know, no such powers exist—we mean merely the unknown and entirely inscrutable differences which make some men's writings argumentative and others imaginative. Possibly we might say that we are conscious that these qualities of the writings address different elements in our own minds, though we should be very apt to mislead ourselves if we did so, and there is certainly no reason that we should run any such risk. Indeed there is good reason to say that the most important of the mental operations which result in the production of something artistic do not take place on the realm of consciousness at all, but in some deeper, inscrutable region, and are taken up into the similar hidden region in our own minds. Thus, some of the literary features of folk-lore and mythology can be explained only by saying that they are unexplainable. It is, therefore, by a sort of figure that we speak of "the power of drawing character," "the phrasal power," etc. We examine different products and find marked differ-

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ences of structure and texture. These differences we refer illegitimately to corresponding differences in the minds of different authors. But no harm can be done if we speak of parts or provinces of the literary power, though all that we can know anything about are the different characteristics of literary products, if we do not flatter ourselves that we are, in reality, analyzing the human mind (a task in which the human race has wasted, and will always continue to waste, half of its available time). With this reservation of the meaning or extension of the word power, we classify the mental powers as follows :

First: The power of making a unity of a production, so that it is structural and consistent, so that all the parts, sentences, stanzas, paragraphs, and chapters—though some of them may be uninteresting in themselves—contribute to the general effect, and the whole seems organic, as if it had grown by a continuous process. This power is an absolutely necessary one, since, if a production is destitute of unity and continuity, it is merely a collection of materials and suggestions on which the author has not exercised any formative influence. If the material is abundant and complex, like the scenes, events, and characters of a long narrative, the production of a unity is one of the decisive marks of genius ; for something is accomplished which is so far beyond the reach of intelligence and industry that it seems

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as if it had come into being without the author's conscious volition. In the short story or poem, or in an argumentative discourse where the whole can be taken into the mind at once, unity is much less difficult of attainment, but even in these cases it is so frequently missed that its presence gives us the pleasure we always feel from contact with the artistic mind. This power is possessed by Hawthorne and Ibsen, though manifested by each in very different ways. Ibsen fuses uninteresting, and sometimes unpleasant, parts into a whole of undeniable power; and Hawthorne makes a mass of ornamental detail subservient to a central conception with such skill that we sometimes overlook the beauty of the parts in our admiration of the whole.

Second: The power of realizing a character so that significant and insignificant words and actions, and even apparently contradictory words and actions, are always harmonious with, and dependent on, the nature of the living agent or character from which they proceed, and so that all the character is represented as doing and thinking, and all that the other characters say about it is traceable to natural human springs of action and thought, and contributes towards making clear, definite, and human our conception of the character. This is the greatest artistic power, for it implies insight and sympathetic feeling as well as observation. Human nature is the

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most complicated and interesting phenomenon presented to us, and although the problems it presents can never be solved, the statement of them is more attractive than the certainties of science. The concrete embodiment of one of these problems, whether on canvas or in a printed book, can be effected only by an artist of exceptional powers. The best exemplification of this power is Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. This power is possessed in different degrees by Thackeray, Tolstoi, George Eliot, Chaucer, Jane Austen, Fielding, Defoe, and many others. It is measured as much by the range of characters a writer is capable of presenting as by definiteness in presenting a few. As a rule, definiteness or realism increases as scope or depth decreases ; but in any case, depth is preferable to definiteness, because human nature is too complex for accurate scientific presentment. Thus Shakespeare, who gives us a number of types of man universal, is superior to Thackeray or Fielding, who gives us a limited number of types of the species Englishman, restricted, too, to the Englishman as he appeared in one or two centuries. Many great artists, as Tennyson, Byron, and in a less degree Browning, are deficient in this power.

Third : The power of suggesting the relation of man to nature and to the universal harmony of things, of giving us a glimpse beyond this little world of ours, "where shadow pursues shad-

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ow," into the world of realities, of showing us the weakness of human reason and the power of the moral law, the freedom and courage of the will and the strength of affection and habit; the power, in other words, of presenting a conception of the world as it really is through the medium of the world as it seems. All this depends on the presence in the writer's mind of a sane and substantial philosophy of life. By this is meant, not a reasoned philosophy or metaphysical theory, but an instinctive judgment which estimates at their proper relative values all of the objects of desire and aversion, all of the controlling motives of men. This balance or sanity of mind is not a distinctive mark of the writer, for it may be found in men who feel no impulse to expression, and then it gives to conduct a certain justness and rationality. When it is found in a writer, it may not at all add to his artistic effectiveness, but it gives his work a truth and a relation to universal law, which we say—for want of a better term—is a result of the writer's philosophical power. This power is one of the many elements of Shakespeare's greatness, and its absence relegates Byron, magnificent artist as he is, to the second or third rank.

Fourth: The power of expressing thought in musical words. This, though but a small matter in itself, contributes more than any other element to giving a production lasting popularity

It is a complex matter of vowel sequence, consonant sequence, phrase cadence, and sentence wave, subtly related to the thought, and a result of the complex personality of the writer. It colors the thought somewhat in the same way that the tone of the voice, modulation, gesture, and expression of the face color vocal utterance, making it infinitely richer and fuller, and sometimes giving words a meaning quite different from their bare significance. In metrical form it fills the words with indefinite suggestion. It is for this reason that poetry is so much more condensed than prose, and that so much more can be hinted at in verse, although a given number of words in verse require much more time for utterance aloud than the same number in prose. Swinburne is remarkable for possessing this power in such excess as to obscure, if not exclude, all others.

Fifth : The feeling for words, so that the right ones come readily to the mind, or, as it is designated, the phrasal power. Words are full of associations, and when skilfully combined the associations heighten each other with striking effect. Many words are used metaphorically in ordinary discourse, and a novel use is usually a new metaphor. This is the technical art which is necessary to render the other powers effective. It is acquired by practice, though aptitudes vary greatly. The phrasal power is one element—perhaps the

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most important one—of wit. The musical power has reference to words as sounds ; this has more reference to the words as symbols of ideas.

Sixth : The descriptive power. We have to do with a world of appearances with which our senses put us in relation. One of the functions of art is to enable us to see what the artist has seen as it appears to him. The artist is a man whose powers of observation are superior to ours and are trained. Consequently he sees more and more truly than we. The literary artist puts us in possession of his impression of things. He may describe a crowded street, a mother and child, or a forest lake, but in any case he discloses part of the real nature of the object and makes us see it as he saw it, whether he saw it with his bodily eye or in imagination. To call up before the mind images of the concrete is the function of description. Every one who writes attempts description, because it is easy to do passably, though so difficult to do well. Stevenson is remarkable for the power of his short descriptive touches woven into his narration ; Ruskin, for the pictorial quality of his description of the sea and clouds ; Macaulay, for the gorgeous, theatrical quality of his descriptions of historic scenes.

Seventh : Intensity of feeling and readiness to emotional excitement. This is, perhaps, not so much an artistic power as it is a dynamic force which gives energy to the working of the others.

but it certainly imparts an air of conviction, and consequently the quality of sincerity and strength to whatever is written. What a man writes is invariably colored by the intensity of his beliefs. He feels and expresses his feeling. He has some ideas about causes and consequences of events, about right and wrong, and about himself and other people. These opinions may be right or wrong, and usually are partly right and partly wrong, but if a writer holds them with intensity of conviction it gives his utterances a power over other men that is one of the qualities that, when infused into a record, constitute literary value. Thus, the intense conviction apparent in Milton's prose and Dante's poem adds to the dignity and strength of their writings.

If men possessing several of the qualities outlined above write, what they write becomes literature. If a man possessing most of them in a high degree writes, what he writes becomes literature of the first order. It must not be supposed, however, that the above analysis furnishes a mechanical system by which we can unerringly assign the literary rank of any production. For all these powers are fused into a personality, and in the artistic work of a personality there is an evanescent quality which cannot be classified and yet may be the most important quality of the work. Analysis merely aids us in the criticising of a work of art, by furnishing us with an

outline of the more noticeable qualities of just thought and artistic form. The question as to whether a certain literary product is to rank as a classic is settled by a tacit agreement of several generations. It will be found, however, that some of the qualities referred to are invariably present in any work to which the literary public assigns high rank.

It is quite evident that these powers are very different in nature and scope, and that they might be divided into two classes, the technical and the fundamental. The musical, the phrasal, and the descriptive powers are exercised on the workmanship; the philosophical, the emotional, and the character-building powers, as far as they depend on sympathetic insight, are matters of the artist's inner nature and determine the quality of the matter he shapes, not the manner of the shaping; while the power of constructing a complex and multiform unity seems to lie between them, since in its simplest manifestations it is the result of conscious thought, but in its higher workings entirely transcends and sometimes contradicts the laws of technical art. Still, such a grouping is not warranted, since all those powers are intimately connected and interpenetrate each other. The powers of expression are not related to the powers of thought in the way that the skill of a workman is related to the material he fashions, for in literature expression is,

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in a certain sense, equal in value to thought, and form gives matter life and meaning. The artistic manipulation of the idea makes it a new idea, not a new embodiment of the old one. At the same time perfect technique exercised without regard to thought cannot create literature. The two must unite and in reality mould each other and react on each other. Consequently, the technical elements are entitled to rank with the thought elements in an outline classification of literary powers.

It is undoubtedly true that the greater part of the writings that have been popular in their time cease to be read, or, if read, seem dry or tedious, and, by our standard, inartistic. This is especially true of the long romances of the middle ages, of Sidney's *Arcadia*, and even of the novels of fifty years ago. This is because every age has its own manner, which seems a little artificial to those succeeding. But as soon as we become even a little accustomed to this manner and appreciate the contemporaneous way of looking at things and using words, we find that no book ever achieved a lasting reputation without solid literary qualities. A very little examination will lead us to the conclusion that at many periods the artistic standard of the past has been higher than ours of to-day. This is noticeably true of the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries in England. Literature is a reflection of the mind and

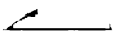
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manners and the life of an age in a form which that age considers good. Literature of the highest order is the same matter in a form which all ages consider good. Taking out nine or ten of Shakespeare's plays, English literature of the highest order would fill a very small volume. But the great body of the literature of any age has an historic interest as a local and temporary expression. This interest we do not propose to consider at all, although it must be admitted that if we learn even a little of the tone and temper of any period we can discern artistic elements in its literature which we should otherwise have overlooked entirely. Contemporary production calls out a lively personal interest disproportioned to artistic value because it is addressed directly to us, and embodies our own thoughts. Such interest is very short-lived, unless a book possesses, like most of Stevenson's and Walter Pater's, for instance, some of the higher qualities. The question what gives a book immediate popularity, although a very interesting and difficult one, is quite different from the question what gives a book permanence, what makes it literature?

It must be admitted that in all artistic questions definition and analysis go but little way. In literature especially the function of analysis is merely an attempt to give us a reasonable basis for an enthusiastic enjoyment and love felt be-

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fore the analysis is undertaken. Still, the consciousness that there is such a basis undoubtedly strengthens our regard for and pleasure in that which we already enjoyed unreflectively. But it is not claimed that any analysis can be final. Perhaps literary excellence depends more on a harmony and proportion between the qualities that have been instanced than on the qualities themselves. Perhaps the essential elements are too subtle to be analyzed. A chemist can analyze a wine and discover sugar and alcohol and water and some complicated hydro-carbons, but that which makes the perfume or bouquet escapes him. It is quite as hopeless to attempt to isolate the charm of Charles Lamb or Sir Thomas Browne. It must be borne in mind in the following criticism of the literary powers that the whole, the artistic personality, is far greater than the parts or powers into which it is divided, even if we admit that the classification is based on real and elemental distinctions.



## CHAPTER II

### UNITY

THE first quality, unity, is an absolutely necessary one. An agglomeration of material has no literary value, any more than a stone-heap has an architectural value. Matter must be subjected to some constraining or arranging force, it must be acted on in some way by nature or will before it has any claims to arouse an intelligent interest, to say nothing of a sense of life and beauty. The stone-heap must be stratified by running water or moulded by the secular action of a glacier, or it remains a blot on the landscape. The stock of facts, the detached thoughts and series of unrelated impressions a man collects on a subject, must be arranged or modified by an individual mind, or they remain what they were, parts or pieces, fragments, not a whole. The consciousness of the presence of a human being, a mind which has worked over the matter which we are reading, is one source of our pleasure in literature. But if the author has done nothing but amass he is uninteresting. A

personality which merely amasses is unintelligent. To attract others it must be evident that it has arranged, selected, and ordered the material it has gathered, and that not by some mechanical law, but by a law of its own ; otherwise we take very little interest in its work. The power of artistic selection, of rejecting the unharmonious and incongruous, results in the production of an organic unity—a whole, impressed with the nature of a living man—something which could not have resulted from the work of any other. There is no originality in collecting facts and presenting them merely according to some traditional method. The personal manner modifying and tempering the traditional method gives life and definite character and an organic if not a formal unity.

Before distinguishing between organic and formal unity, we will consider briefly unity as applied to long and short compositions. The term unity is applicable to short productions—lyrics, sonnets, and, in a limited sense, even to sentences. In a short composition, where all the parts can be readily considered at once, it is of course much easier of attainment. We shall therefore restrict its application to compositions of some extension. Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* is an excellent example of poetic unity in tone, congruity of metaphor, and incident. So also is Keats's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*. But this latter is

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so short that it is not much more than a bit of impressionism, the presenting of a single object from a single point of view. It is therefore inferior, as an example of the power of Keats over his material, to *Isabella* or to *Lamia*. *Endymion* is long enough to prove that Keats at first was not strong in artistic construction, although the sonnet *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer* is as well rounded and compact a poetic unit as our literature can show. But the *Eve of St. Agnes* is long enough to convince us that he was able to mould a considerable mass of material.

A book of detached thoughts like Coleridge's *Table Talk* possesses no unity and makes claim to none, although it is eminently Coleridgean throughout. It is like a glacial moraine, composed of subangular stones and some mud. The stones have evidently been through a grinding process and are from very different sources, some of them from near-by and some of them great blocks from the inaccessible summits of distant mountains. But as a whole they constitute nothing and cannot be said to be a unity.

Aphorisms or proverbs are frequently very laconic and pithy expressions of shrewd observation—"the wisdom of many and the wit of one." But a collection of proverbs has no unity, although interesting as a product of the race or nation. Usually half of it is better than the

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whole. Rochefoucauld's *Maxims* have a similarity like a lot of marbles in the same bag, all rubbed smooth by some mechanical process. These maxims have their source in the same cynical, shrewd mind, and bear the mark of the French passion for polished epigrammatic expression and for slandering human nature in an elegant manner, but they make no whole except in the sense of being bound into a book.

Shakespeare's *Sonnets* seem to suggest division into three connected poems, treating three separate phases of human feeling. If the author had undertaken the task, no doubt by rearrangement, rejecting some sonnets and inserting connecting poems, he could have brought to light two, possibly three, poetic wholes. For any modern to do more than to suggest such a possibility is absurd, because to create a poetic unity is the highest effort of the artistic mind. In this case we must be content with great fragments, complete in themselves, and the merest shadows of what the wholes might have been.

As a rule, a biography possesses a certain amount of unity, because it is the life of a single man, usually of one who is a person of marked individuality. Sometimes, when many letters are introduced, biographies are little more than collections of material. But letters illustrate character, and when the person writing the biography has some constructive skill and a vivid impres-

sion of the character, and takes pains to make his connecting matter clear and refrains from personal comment, and, above all, exercises the art of selection, a "Life and Correspondence" can be made into a whole. Dr. Johnson was so peculiar and entertaining a man, and Boswell had such a distinct character-impression of him, that Boswell's *Life*, though little more than scraps of conversation, is a unity in that it gives the impression of a living figure and a society. To mould together loose bits of anecdote, correspondence, and events into a life which shall be a book in anything more than the mechanical sense is, in reality, creative work. The writer must not be afraid to tell the truth because he fears it may belittle his hero, and he must know instinctively what truth is characteristic and just where to bring it in. Biography is more difficult than fiction. No one has yet appeared who can do justice to such interesting persons as Carlyle, Coleridge, or Shelley. But biographies are rarely dull because the subject is already unified, and they are written around a central figure. All of that excellent series, "The English Men of Letters," are interesting books except Trollope's *Thackeray*. So are nearly all the volumes of *English Worthies*.

The principal divisions of unity are organic unity and formal unity. Organic unity is a quality of a higher order than formal unity. Formal



or logical unity consists in adherence to a plan and in following out a line of thought—in systematic adherence to an outline laid down. It is the result of an intellectual process consciously gone through. Organic unity, on the other hand, results from the unconscious working of the artistic powers. There is not much logical plan in the *Iliad*, and many of the episodes do not seem to lead up to the central catastrophe—the death of Hector; but whoever, whether one man or more, put the twenty-four books together has succeeded in producing an organic unity, in which all parts contribute to a unified impression, and the picture of heroic life is not blurred or confused by any change of stand-point or by the introduction of any inharmonious elements. It is difficult to believe that the parts can be the work of different men, and if they are so, it must be that in the early schools of poetry the individuality of the different singers was much more subordinate to the general tone than is possible at present. The general proposition that organic unity is the result of the working of a single artistic mind is justified by all we know of modern literature, so much so that we cannot conceive of *In Memoriam* or *The Ring and The Book* being written in collaboration. A book marked simply by logical unity might be written by several people in collaboration, for one would be the director and lay out the plan and the others would be

subordinates ; but organic unity results when all the details bear the impress of the individual imagination, and style, plot, and diction have the incommunicable mark of the same spirit.

Logical unity, being an affair of the intellect, can be attained by painstaking and practice. It is the subject of the well-known rules : put but one main assertion and appropriate modifiers in a sentence, treat one subordinate topic in a paragraph, refer, when possible, in the closing sentence of a paragraph to the subject introduced in the opening, arrange your paragraphs according to a well-considered plan, review the main positions in the close, give your digressions an evident relation to the main proposition, and many others. The best examples of logical unity are arguments on the question whether certain ascertained facts come under certain rules of law. Occasionally these arguments are so perfect in their way as to be almost entitled to be called artistic. The proposition is stated clearly and divested of all complications so as to define the issue with precision. No digression is allowed to intrude and divert the mind from this issue. The arguments are marshalled in order and produced one by one and never repeated. They are so arranged as to be cumulative and to reinforce each other. The mind of the listener is led on from point to point ; he is personally conducted to the conclusion. No lapses of style into ob-

scurity, no elevation into the imaginative, no remote allusions, weary his attention or arouse his suspicion. An argument of this kind, and it may be occasionally heard in any of our cities, is one of the highest achievements of the human mind, but it is not literature, because it is addressed to the intellect solely and not to the imagination. It is an admirable example of logical unity, and in it our age excels every one that has preceded. In the oration—in which the feelings are appealed to and the imagination aroused—earlier ages have excelled us. The oration is a literary form, the argument is not. Nevertheless, the logical unity of the argumentative discourse is a great quality, and commands our admiration scarcely less than the artistic unity of the poem or oration, and, besides, it is the one form which Americans have brought to absolute perfection.

Logical and formal unity are usually carefully observed even by poets who attain artistic unity instinctively. In other words, poets of the first class are men of intellectual force, though they live in the world of the metaphor rather than in the world of the syllogism. Shelley, indeed, gives the impression of paying little attention to the development of a preconceived line of thought, but he was exceptional in many ways. Most of Shakespeare's plays are as well marked by a continuous, systematic plan as by the fusing of all parts harmoniously into a dramatic whole. They

were both thought out and they grew. *Paradise Lost* has too much of a plan, *The Faerie Queene* has not enough. In one the reader is conscious of rigidity; in the other, of formlessness. As a rule, logical unity should underlie artistic unity, though the bony framework must not be too much in evidence.

Omitting further reference to logical unity, which any one can attain, unless his mental operations are hopelessly chaotic, if he is willing to take pains in thinking out his subject and in rearranging and rewriting his matter whenever he feels certain that he can in any way render his preconceived plan more lucid and coherent, we will proceed to consider some of the simpler elements of artistic unity. The fusing of subtle and incongruous elements, that which makes Hamlet and Lear consistent and congruous wholes, is a result of artistic passion and earnestness, and cannot be analyzed, but must be felt by sympathy. But there are certain broad and simple principles which can be pointed out.

A unity of style must be observed in the entire composition. Narratives which are told partly in the first person and partly in the third are apt to have a disjointed effect. This disjointed effect is sometimes felt when part of the matter is addressed to the reader and part is in the epistolary form addressed to some imaginary correspondent. The effect of Dickens's *Bleak House* is injured by

the use of this double method, and even in the case of so fine an artist as Thackeray his confidential remarks to the reader interrupt the narrative, although they are nearly always in harmony with the tone of feeling the narrative naturally induces. Unity of style is presupposed from the fact that each man has his own style if he has any original power at all. It is only in the earlier and formative stages that men imitate styles which they admire, and at these periods it is quite proper that they should imitate. If a man has anything to express, he soon attains an individual manner of expression which is a reflex of character. Dickens sometimes writes his first chapters, as in *Dombey and Son* and in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, in a different manner from the body of the work. In the *Pickwick Papers* the first part is an entirely different tone from the rest of the book. The broad farce, or burlesque, of the introduction characterizes the treatment—at least, as far as the finding of the stone with the inscription, “Bill Stumps his mark.” Afterwards, as the characters formed themselves in the author’s mind, the tone subsides into that of genial serio-comedy. This arises from the fact that the book was written in serial form and begun without a definite conception of the treatment. In this case it is but a small matter, as the book is throughout a delightful specimen of humor, but the transition from the pure comic to the serio-

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comic stand-point is apt to cause an unpleasant jar to the artistic sensibility. The transition from the humorous to the pathetic, on the contrary, is a perfectly natural one, for humor and pathos lie very close together. The power of Cervantes is shown by the fact that with all his depth of suggestion he holds uniformly to one style and one relation to his subject-matter from beginning to end of his book, never allowing the serious thought quite to arrest the smile, nor the smile to pass into laughter.

The higher qualities of style : the slight, almost imperceptible changes to suit the changing situations, the delicate shades which give the atmosphere, have relation to a higher unity, the unity between form and thing signified, and are among the greater qualities of the literary art. They must be felt. They can hardly be instanced except in a long treatise on some particular work. Miss Sarah Jewett's sketches of New England life are beautiful examples of this quality. The qualities which constitute the writer's literary touch cannot be imitated. A skilful mimic may reproduce a few of the notes, and we may think for an instant that we have heard the genuine voice. Verbal peculiarities which lie on the surface can be detached and copied, but the essence of style is not verbal form, it is congruity between the verbal form and the thought, the tone. It is a harmony between a number of elements,

and in really good style one of the elements is intimately related to the structure of the mind, which is different in each individual and is the result of slow individual development. In this sense style is vital and personal. If any one should try to imitate Carlyle's or even Macaulay's style, he would find that he could appropriate only the outside of it. Correctness can be acquired by painstaking, but "style," like the voice, "is the man," and it is developed only by practice. In the fullest meaning of unity of style, unity of stand-point and of personal imaginative conception, not merely a similarity of literary manner, is embraced.

Unity of subject, so necessary to a logical discourse, is not indispensable to literature. Thus, a man may digress from his subject and bring in apparently irrelevant matter, may seem to wander, and still by unity of style and stand-point give his product literary distinction. He may ramble, one thing suggesting another, and still look at everything from the same mental point of view and impress his own personality upon everything he says, and in the end attain, apparently without design, the effect of unity. Emerson's *Essays* have little logical unity—they are quite destitute of formal unity, there are no paragraphs headed a, b, and c, but it is always the serene, pure Emerson who speaks; always the spiritual meaning of things that are looked for,

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and always the same flow of genial, polished epigrams. There is unity of purpose, of style, and of stand-point. The unity of subject consists pretty much in the heading "Nature" or "Genius" at the top of the paper. He starts from his text and proceeds where his "ghost leads him," tacking about in the sea of thought and not troubling himself about voyaging to any certain point. But no one would accuse Emerson of a lack of unity, so strong is the unity of style and the unity of treatment in all he has written. But it is doubtful if another as weighty a writer could be named whose method is so little formal.

The most difficult kind of writing in which to preserve the unities is a narrative. It must of course have unity of subject, and as far as the subject is the lives of a certain set of persons it is not difficult to attain. Intrusive characters can be shown the door promptly. It sometimes does happen that a subordinate character assumes importance in the author's imagination, becomes interesting, and is brought in too frequently. The character group thereby becomes disturbed or out of perspective. The exuberant fancy of Dickens leads him to fall into this error sometimes. The short story is of course not liable to this fault. The Greeks were wise in restricting their dramas to a short story, having mechanical unity: a small group of people, a single incident, a catastrophe, one stage or place of action, and a

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single day or uninterrupted period of time. By restricting their narratives to the denouement in this rigid way, unity of effect was insured. They made, as they did in their temple, a whole out of a few parts, all carefully proportioned, and considered with reference to their relation to the whole. To compose the columns and cornice and pediment of the Grecian Sacred House into a perfect harmony was an artistic achievement which has ever since compelled the admiration of those best fitted to estimate it. But it argues a more powerful artistic energy to put together the multifarious and seemingly incongruous details of a Gothic cathedral so as to create a unified impression. There is a bewildering multiplicity of ornament, in which the grotesque and horrible are close to the simple and pathetic. Yet all the elements—some tawdry and some magnificent, some obscene and some delicately reverential—are made parts of a whole; that is, the cathedral. That this should be true the successive master-builders must have been unconsciously under the dominion of the same general conception of life, whereas of the Greek builders we can only say that they were subject to the same particular conception of beauty, and life is more than beauty. For the same reason we can say that the imagination must have worked at a high temperature to bind together into a unity the multifarious details of impulse and character in Hamlet or the

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incongruous elements of dignity, degradation, loyalty, and selfishness in Lear. Since the Christian era human character has developed new elements—pity, humility, enthusiasm for humanity, and humor—and as character is enriched and broadened, so must art, its reflex, develop from the massive simplicity of Æschylus to the multi-form unity of Shakespeare.

Nevertheless, Aristotle's rules are as valid as ever—one day, one place, one action. The first two rules must be interpreted by the fact that the Greek drama admitted the chorus, which asked about or commented on events that were not presented, and that had happened long before or in distant places. The important action is still the catastrophe. It is a unit, and there must be but one culmination and all must lead up to it. In her shorter tales—*Silas Marner*, *Adam Bede*, *Scenes of Clerical Life*—George Eliot shows herself an admirable constructor. *Daniel Deronda*, however, is spoiled by two culminations. The lives of Gwendolen Harleth and Daniel Deronda are two separate streams of interest, never merged into one. The tragedy of Gwendolen's marriage to Grandcourt is absorbing and dreadful, compelling pity, almost terror. After that the fate of Daniel and Mirah is unimportant and uninteresting. *The Merchant of Venice* also comes perilously near to the defect of a divided interest. But the Jessica and Lorenzo story is skilfully in-

terwoven with the main plot, and, above all, is kept subordinate, and the characters are slighter. Shakespeare, by his profusion of color, almost too lavish sometimes, can make details interesting, even if so irrelevant as to distract the attention. But in *Othello*, *Lear*, and *Macbeth* the scenes march. Their order cannot be changed. Each heightens the last and leads to the next. Events move with remorseless logic. The mutilated versions of the modern stage give no impression of the power of the whole, for the unity is lost, and the spectator's memory must suggest as much as his imagination supplies when he sees a headless statue of Phidias.

The unity of plot is a complex unity—a unity of a high order. The lesser unities of subject, treatment, and stand-point are of course implied. The series of events and interactions which constitute a plot are the results partly of human wills, partly of the laws of cause and effect, physical and moral, which govern the world, and partly of the environment of habit, prejudice, and tradition which surround every individual—that is to say, of that part of the social order to the influence of which he has been subjected. The construction of a plot is therefore dependent on the writer's instinctive appreciation of the relative strength of these agencies; and men usually exaggerate the importance of some of them, sometimes over-estimating the power of an independent

will; sometimes forgetting that the moral law, though its action may be suspended, is never entirely set aside, and that its suspensions are temporary and episodic; and sometimes giving the social forces an undue control in their estimate of the individual life. If an erroneous conception of the balance of these forces is tenaciously held by a writer, his plot may have unity, but must lack adequate truth. If he makes changes in his conception of the balances of causation in the progress of a plot, the reader becomes aware of something artistically unsatisfactory. If some physical catastrophe is forced to take place—the opportune death of a troublesome character—or if the individual will is represented as yielding in some position where our knowledge of human nature teaches us it would be unaffected, we feel a sense of an illegitimate combination of the normal and the abnormal. In early literature so little was known of the unvarying, mechanical character of physical laws that writers did not hesitate to resort to a miracle or to set causation aside in one province entirely. This is no longer allowable, and, in consequence, the difficulty of constructing a consistent plot is vastly increased. Events must be at least possible, and their sequences should be probable. They must be startling and alarming, because we feel that we ourselves might be caught up in a similar train, but not contrary to all experience. No modern nov-

elist would dare to represent his hero as beheaded and brought to life again after the fashion of the early romancers. But some of them do not hesitate to bring a man morally dead back to moral health—a miracle as much out of the question as the physical one. In early times Minerva could set aside the laws of nature and Jupiter could interfere and reverse her work ; yet even he was powerless to control the Fates. Now the Fates only are left, and their actions are obscure and infinitely harder to comprehend than that of the picturesque and irascible gods. A plot must be a piece of life. It has unity when it is an accurate copy ; consequently a very small piece must be taken, for no one person can comprehend more than a very small part of life ; but it must be a piece of the whole, a unity taken out of the great unity. Therefore a plot, or a sequence of events bound together by the contradictory and interwoven laws of necessity and freedom, is one of the most difficult achievements of the human mind.

Of the moderns, Hawthorne possesses in a remarkable degree the power of impressing unity on his creations. His hand is firm. He never wavers in style, stand-point, aim, or subject by a hair's-breadth. His plots are simple, his motives more so ; in fact, no people ever were dominated by so few impulses as are the characters in Hawthorne's romances. There is something Greek in

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their simplicity, although they are as unlike a Greek conception of humanity as are Caliban or Ariel. But they never waver. Such as the author conceived them in the first chapter, they remain to the end. There is no growth or development of character. This gives his tales an atmosphere which is never blown away by any nineteenth-century wind, and a unity which insures them a place in the literature which endures. There is a certain sameness about his style which might become monotonous in spite of its wonderful charm, and a limited experience of life which might become uninteresting, and an impress of a poverty-stricken and repellent external world which might become disheartening, but the unity is so thoroughly artistic that the pleasure received far outweighs the annoyance which is caused by the depressing and fatalistic atmosphere which envelops some of his romances.

Unity alone will not give a composition excellence. Unity of style may be the sameness of a bad or affected style. Unity of subject may consist in a succession of uninteresting, insignificant events. Unity of characters may cover a crowd of commonplace individuals. Unity of standpoint may mean a near-sighted and commercial view of the world of men and things, and unity of purpose an unchanging determination to make prominent the narrow prejudices of the writer. A writer cannot make a great thing of petty

parts, nor in a small way. There must be the great conception and the broad treatment. Unity results from a human intelligence working on matter, or on the reflex of the material world we call thought, and when an artistic intelligence works on a subject worthy of it the product receives form and permanence. The unity is then fundamental, and gives a life which men recognize when they read the book or enter the temple long afterwards.

Unity of stand-point implies unity of treatment. A violation of this unity is in such bad taste that it is avoided instinctively in short poems. Such an error is like a distinctly false note in music. Suppose a poem begins :

"There was a maiden lived by the sea,  
And she was fair as fair could be,"

we perceive at once that the writer has adopted the manner of the ballad. He must continue artless, unsentimental, unreflective, and must keep to the simplest, most natural emotions.

Now, if we find a line like this :

"She was a girl of the wild-flower kind,"

we are unpleasantly affected, because a more modern way of looking at the subject—a sort of affected rusticity—is assumed, an attitude of pleased superiority, patronizingly sensible of the beauty of nature. The word "girl" starts an

entirely different train of thought and association from the word "maiden." If after this he should bring in the word "lady" the effect would be still worse, because he would have gone over to the stand-point of the *vers de société*—gallant, insincere, and artificial. No instance of such a shocking violation of the unity of stand-point can be found in literature, and the example is invented to illustrate the possibilities of error. In the work of minor poets we are occasionally conscious of a false note which on examination will be found to be due to a lack of unity of stand-point and treatment.

The following poem preserves all these unities, as, indeed, does everything written by Browning:

#### SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER

"Gr-r-r—there go, my heart's abhorrence!  
Water your damned flower-pots, do!  
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,  
God's blood, would not mine kill you?  
What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?  
Oh, that rose has prior claims—  
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?  
Hell dry you up with its flames!

"At the meal we sit together:  
*Salve tibi!* I must hear  
Wise talk of the kind of weather,  
Sort of season, time of year;

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*Not a plenteous cork-crop; scarcely  
Dare one hope oak-galls, I doubt;  
What's the Latin name for 'parsley'?*  
What's the Greek name for Swine's-snout?

"Whew! we'll have our platter burnished,  
Laid with care on our own shelf!  
With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,  
And a goblet for ourself,  
Rinsed like something sacrificial  
Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps—  
Marked with L for our initial!  
(He—he! There his lily snaps!)

"*Saint*, forsooth! while brown Dolores  
Squats outside the Convent bank,  
With Sanchicha, telling stories,  
Steeping tresses in the tank,  
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs.  
Can't I see his dead eye glow,  
Bright as 'twere Barbary corsair's?  
(That is, if he'd let it show!)

"When he finishes refection,  
Knife and fork he never lays  
Cross-wise, to my recollection,  
As do I, in Jesu's praise.  
I, the Trinity illustrate,  
Drinking watered orange-pulp—  
In three sips the Arian frustrate;  
While he drains his at one gulp.

"Oh, those melons! If he's able  
 We're to have a feast! so nice!  
 One goes to the abbot's table,  
 All of us get each a slice.  
 How go on your flowers? None double?  
 Not one fruit-sort can you spy?  
 Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble,  
 Keep 'em close-nipped on the sly!

"There's a great text in Galatians,  
 Once you trip on it, entails  
 Twenty-nine distinct damnations,  
 One sure, if another fails:  
 If I trip him just a-dying,  
 Sure of heaven as sure can be,  
 Spin him round and send him flying  
 Off to hell, a Manichee?

"Or, my scrofulous French novel,  
 On gray paper with blunt type!  
 Simply glance at it, you grovel  
 Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:  
 If I double down its pages  
 At the woful sixteenth print,  
 When he gathers his greengages,  
 Ope a sieve and slip it in't?

"Or, there's Satan!—one might venture  
 Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave  
 Such a flaw in the indenture  
 As he'd miss till, past retrieve,

Blasted lay that rose-acacia  
We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine...*  
'St, there's Vespers! *Plena gratid,*  
*Ave, Virgo!* Gr-r-r—you swine!"

Browning's idea is not easy to catch, until, as Mr. Hutton says, "we see that he is painting the jealous disgust and tricky spite felt by a passionate, self-indulging, sensual, superstitious monk for the pale, vegetating, contented sort of saint who takes to gardening and 'talks crops' at the monastery table." Viewed as a dramatic fragment, we feel that every verse expresses the unreasoning dislike of a low, cunning nature for a harmless and blameless one, with which it is forced to consort. Every verse conveys exactly the same impression as the whole. Every word is what might come from the heart of the envious, spiteful speaker. We might possibly object to the word "scrofulous," applied to the novel, as a sort of literary adjective not likely to be used by so brutish a man as the speaker, but it would be to "consider too curiously to consider thus." The poem has the vigor of unity of every kind impressed on it by the strong man who wrote it.

The poem quoted is, however, composed of few elements. A dramatic monologue presents but a single mood of a single speaker's mind. Narrative details a succession of events succeeding each other by natural law, modified by the agen-

cies of a set of people. The unity in a narrative is, therefore, a more complex one. There must be a harmony in the group of actors who, though diverse as individuals, belong to the same general period of human development. There must also be a harmony between the individuals and their surroundings and situations, unless the tone of the narrative be grotesque or comic. There must also be a harmony between the actions of the group and the general laws which govern human actions. The course of events must be natural. The superficial motives of men—habit, personal vanity, family affection, self-interest, and sexual attraction—are very evident in any community, and govern ordinary action, and can be studied from models by every one. But there are many more complicated motives at work in men's characters, prompting action frequently in direct contradiction to the more superficial motives. These hidden motives cannot be studied because we are unconscious of them; they can only be divined. Among these are: intellectual pride, loyalty to the race, reverence for universal law, enthusiasm for an unattainable ideal, not to speak of the opposite of these: the brutish instincts of cruelty and destruction, that we have inherited from the brute side of our ancestry. The stronger a man's nature is, the more apt are the deep, unconscious motives to come to the surface. The writer who divines the circumstances which

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bring into action motives of this obscure character attains the highest unity, because there is a harmony between the actions of his characters and the more complex laws of human nature. He is natural, though he puts on the same canvas Iago and Desdemona, Cloten and Imogen, Caliban and Miranda, Mephistophiles and Marguerite.

By unity of the group of characters is not meant that they should all be of the same type or that they should all belong to the same stratum of society, since the chief interest of a narrative comes from the contrast of character and the clashing of wills incited by different habits and antecedent circumstance. Even types from widely diverse but contemporaneous civilization may be represented, as in Kipling's tales, with striking artistic effect, if the perception of the real nature of each is profound and accurate. But to put a man with the peculiar cast of thought which marks the present on the same canvas with reproductions of the life of earlier centuries distorts the character group, unless the spirit of the past is apprehended as only the highest imaginative genius can apprehend it. There is a unity between the character group and their environment in *The House of the Seven Gables* which is satisfying to the artistic sense. The people belong together and to the early New England as the author understood it. Such a unity as this

is one of the constituents of true beauty. Suppose that one of Howells's people, admirable in his own place, were intruded, the effect would be very disagreeable, to say the least. In Tennyson's *Idyls of the King* the ethical tone of modern times is jumbled up with the simplicity of the traditionary, heroic, ethical tone. Tennyson has the Englishman's firmly based ideas about the marriage contract, the duties of an aristocracy, the relation of a king to society, the obligations of a gentleman, which are all entirely foreign to the spirit of the original. At the same time he had the poet-scholar's conception of the knight, his loyalty, his standard of duty, and his ideal of woman. These two are irreconcilable, but, as the poet was dominated by both, a lack of unity of conception results. The characters all respond to motives, some of which are marked by the noble, childlike simplicity of the heroic age, and others belong to the ideal gentleman of the nineteenth century. Arthur's character, in particular, is compounded of incongruous traits and gives the impression of a poorly dressed actor. The entire epic seems like a masquerade, in spite of the noble, artistic quality of the verse. It is this lack of unity rather than the wavering between the allegorical and the epic stand-point which weakens the poem as a whole. In *The Princess*, where the treatment is frankly ideal, the incongruity between the modern sentiment and the

semi-chivalric setting is easily overlooked. The tale is Tennyson's own, and we are willing that he should handle it as he likes, but the story of Arthur is national and can hardly be compounded with modern conventional ethics.

There is another beautiful reproduction of the antique, Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, perhaps the most poetic book of the latter part of the century, where the author has recreated the past and then set his own acquaintances in it, for Marius and his friends Flavian and Cornelius are reproductions of certain refined and charming types of the Oxford student. This, too, is ideal, but the incongruity between the actors and the historical setting is readily overlooked. Had they been semi-historical personages, characters evolved by early myth or legend, we could not do so.

In this age of complex and refined perception it is a difficult matter to revivify an ancient civilization. It is difficult even to create a modern environment and a group of characters harmonizing with it. Goethe never fails, nor does Victor Hugo or Tolstoi. Thackeray in his eighteenth-century novels has succeeded in creating a past harmonious with his characters. *Vanity Fair* we may believe he drew largely from observation, from the study of models, but *Henry Esmond* is a creation of the imagination kindled by the study of old books, pictures, and buildings. Both

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these are perfect examples of literary unity, but the latter is the more wonderful work of art because experience could aid less in its construction.

If supernatural agencies are introduced they must harmonize with the natural ones and with the general tone of the surroundings, otherwise the incongruity becomes comic. Hamlet, the Ghost, and the bastions of Elsinore are all of a piece, and so are the witches, the blasted heath, and the imaginative, unscrupulous, unstable soldier whose moral indifference the embodiments of evil address with the certainty of meeting a response. Hamlet is a prince and his father's spirit is the "Royal Dane." Ariel addressing Hamlet, or Puck teasing Macbeth would have been as much out of place as Jupiter in Boston or "Pan in Wall Street." The intrusion of the supernatural into the commonplace as in modern spiritualism is very bad art. The first part of the story of *Trilby* is admirable, worthy of Thackeray at his best. But the supernatural element, the hypnotic possession of the heroine by an evil nature, which might have harmonized with some tale of mediæval artist life, is entirely out of keeping with the realistic presentation of Paris thirty years ago. Hawthorne uses this idea of hypnotic possession in *The Blithedale Romance* in such a way as to avoid all unpleasant effect or suggestion of the impossible.

Unity results when things are put together



that belong together, when the elementary parts harmonize and are interrelated as the parts of any material product of natural growth are: a plant, a tree, a wild animal. These things are organic, arranged by slow-working, inexorable laws. The unity of a literary production is higher than theirs because its cause is a mind working on ideas instead of a force working on matter, but it is rarely so perfect, for nature is a better workman than man, and sets the copies for him.

## CHAPTER III

### THE POWER OF DRAWING CHARACTER

THE second of the literary powers is the ability to create by narration or description, in the mind of the reader, an idea or impression of a human character, as an agent or force, as distinguished from a machine or automaton. When we have read a biography, or a novel, or a poem of action, we form in our minds a notion, more or less clear, of the personages of the story. Sometimes we feel they are very much like our every-day acquaintances ; sometimes that they are extremely odd and peculiar people, whose actions are unaccountable on any theory of human nature ; sometimes we feel that we know them very well ; sometimes that they are obscure and baffling. Sometimes we feel that we know only a part of their characters, and that there is more in them than appears ; sometimes that one or two of the characters are ideal, that they act habitually from the higher, unselfish motives for which we have a great reverence, although we do not allow such motives much weight in our ordinary con-

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duct, and are only vaguely conscious of their presence with us at times. In some cases we become much interested in the characters in a book, and follow their fortunes with lively interest for their own sakes, in others they are dreadfully commonplace and tiresome. Sometimes we find we can form a visual image of these imaginary beings, occasionally a very sharp and distinct image, and sometimes the personal appearance of the hero in whose fortune we have been interested is uncertain, although his character, the man himself, is very definite. All these effects on us are the results of the writer's art, of his power of conceiving and making real a character reacting on our insatiable interest in human beings. We will consider very generally, first, the greatness and importance of this power; next, its historical development; and, lastly, the different modes or methods of its exercise by artists of different types.

It can hardly be doubted that the power of conceiving and drawing character is higher than any strictly intellectual attribute of man. The possession of it implies sympathy with humanity, keen observation, humor, and a faculty to which common consent gives the name of creative. It cannot be imparted by training, and it is by no means dependent on life experience. The personality or real character of a man is something subtle, hidden, and elusive, and the personality of

a woman is something even more baffling, complicated, and unanalyzable. This personality expresses itself through the physical body, of which it is the centre, by the means of many thousand delicate and scarcely perceptible modifications. It also impresses itself on other persons, and also on animals by its totality, in an entirely inexplicable way, through hidden and mysterious channels. This we sometimes try to explain by saying that a certain person possesses animal magnetism. He attracts us by virtue of his personality without contact or any visible medium. Horses or dogs obey him, or they evince an unexplainable prejudice against him. We cannot assert that there is no basis for this feeling simply because we cannot define it. To describe a personality in a book so that it shall carry with it some of the atmosphere which we feel, without any producible evidence, surrounds a real person, implies an artistic power of a very high order, whether we consider the means or the result.

In sketching character, artistic power must be supplemented by sympathetic insight, or, rather, sympathy must thoroughly pervade it. This is because the human personality is by far the most complicated centre of force of which we have knowledge, so much so that it cannot be made the subject of a science. Characters intellectually conceived and laboriously analyzed lack the full, rich, wayward life that is so attractive in

those that are formed, or form themselves, in the writer's imagination. Human nature presents such wonderful diversity that of the countless millions of men that have appeared on earth no two have been precisely alike, and the higher the development the more marked become the individual differences. No system of education has been discovered which is universally applicable—in fact, no rigid system which is not as likely to do harm to some as it is likely to do good to others, for identical influences sometimes produce contrary results. We learn what we know of human nature from experience, but if we attempt to tabulate our experience into general rules we find that we can do nothing except in the way of loose classification, for the exceptions to the laws are quite as important as the conformities. This follows from the fact that every man is not only a member of the human family, but is also an unique specimen, and is essentially and everlastingly himself. The appreciation of individual character is something instinctive, and the power of embodying an individuality in written words demands a peculiar and delicate emotional susceptibility, as well as the ability to convey to others the impression the author has formed in his own mind.

By external marks and acquired habit men are divided into general classes: the ecclesiastic, the man of the world, the man of affairs, the student,

the drunkard, and countless others. The inferior character-artist is satisfied if he can portray vividly the distinguishing features of the type, and represent for his readers the phraseology and mode of thought distinctive of the type, giving to every Englishman, for example, the English national peculiarities and to the ecclesiastic and the scientist their professional diction and nothing more. The type-marks are undoubtedly important and should never be overlooked, but they should be shown as embedded in the individual character. To the true character-artist his personages are both types and distinctly living individuals. Thus in Meredith's *Egoist* Sir Willoughby Patterne is the typical selfish man, but he is as much himself as if he were the only man in the world. Even in short sketches, the typical qualities and the personal qualities can be welded together, if the writer really conceives a man. Words that the living character speaks, though apparently irrelevant and unimportant, affect our imaginations insensibly in precisely the way required to build up in our minds a congruous and satisfying notion of a human being. That a writer can also do this seems the more wonderful when we consider the limitations of the means at his disposal, for written words alone are an inadequate means to produce so complex an effect. In our every-day intercourse a personality reveals itself by voice, gesture, bearing, expression

of body and feature, by a thousand combinations of these as well as by what it says and does. We gather our impression of it from repeated observation, perhaps from years of intercourse. We reconcile contradictory evidence and continually modify our conception of the character by other people's opinion of it. Our impression grows, changes, possibly is always wrong. Sometimes a look or a tone lets us into the secrets of character before unsuspected. When a man or a woman is placed in new and trying circumstances, sometimes the will breaks down; sometimes it surprises us by reacting with a native force which has lain dormant for years. In some regards each man remains a secret to the world, partly so to himself; indeed, he may not know himself as well as his friends know him, so deceitful and deep is the complicated secret of human character. Even the astute Satan, whose experiences as prosecuting attorney for the world should have made him a profound judge of human nature, was wrong in his estimate of Job.

Our forefathers were so impressed by the unfathomable and contradictory nature of humanity that they formed a theory that by the act of a remote ancestor the entire race had been forced into a definite relation to the spiritual world which minimized the individual will, and made actions and destiny to be regulated, not by character, but by the arbitrary decree of an inscru-

table external power. The absolute failure of all theories to account for or to explain humanity from that of original sin to "the evolution of ethics" results from the complication of the subject-matter. But the artist in character attempts to recreate and set before us, through the medium of words, a notion of its elements which shall be true and enlightening. To accomplish this wonderful task the writer must first conceive his character; he must know his imaginary men and women as well as he knows his living acquaintances; then he must disclose them through written words. He can tell us what they said and what others said about them. He can describe their situations, and their personal appearances and their actions. To make all these harmonize, how vivid must be his mental conception of these imaginary beings! How comparatively weak the means he employs, for how inferior is description to sight! how inferior written words to spoken words illustrated by intonations of the voice and expressions of the eye or nervous motions of the hand in giving us a glimpse of the real man! In this the writer is at a great disadvantage. On the other hand, the writer has advantages. For instance, he can make us hear his characters soliloquize; he can lift one of the cloaks behind which the natural man conceals himself. We may be present at secret interviews, may be allowed to listen when he makes love or plots a

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murder or discloses himself to himself. The writer can exercise the artistic power of selection. He can discard from his book the meaningless conversation of every day and select the pregnant words—the note of character. He can manage his character and force him to disclose himself. But he must first conceive his character and have something to disclose. He must remember him as a portrait-painter remembers the face of his sitter, or for a man he may show us a machine; for a character, a name.

The greatness of this power can hardly be over-estimated. It comes nearest to creation. It is not altogether dependent on memory or observation. The character created is not a thing of shreds and patches. It is a new conception. Hamlet is real. People talk about him just as they do about the men they have met. Colonel Newcome, Dorothea Brooke, Maggie Tulliver have an actuality—not the actuality of flesh and blood, but the reality of spiritual entities. They are permanent sources of force; they mould people quite as much as if they had lived or were living now. They are stronger than their creators. They influence lives and characters far more than Shakespeare or George Eliot or Thackeray themselves did, or their real flesh-and-blood children ever did. A great writer raises around him a troop of spirits that are immortal, in whose company he himself is rescued from oblivion.

Shakespeare's daughter, Joanna Hall, is buried in the church-yard of Stratford, and all we know of her is what is written on the stone :

" Witty above her sex,  
But that's not all,  
Wise unto salvation  
Was good Mistress Hall."

But the two hundred sons and daughters of his pen talk with us—challenge our respect or blame—open the secret of the world, and

" Blow ope the iron gates  
Of Death and Lèthè, where confusèd lie  
Great heaps of ruinous mortality.  
As Plato's year and new course of the world  
Them unto us, or us to them, had hurled."

Is there any achievement of the human mind that can compare to the creation of a character in fiction which assumes in men's regards the place of a living personage and calls out blame or love or pity as if it were real?

The superiority of the literary art over the art of painting is nowhere more evident than in the power of individualizing character. The literary artist gives us a succession of moods, the painted portrait is limited to a single instant. The great portrait presents the outward bearing and appearance of a man in a certain mood and in a definite situation. It sums up character

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reacting on a definite environment. Undoubtedly it reflects the image of the soul under the narrow limitations of time more vividly than words can. It may even suggest the man's past. But the writer gives us a continuous succession of portraits in all moods, in all situations. We see Hamlet in the court, then alone, then with the other young men—with his love—with his mother. Sometimes he is talking with his inferiors, then with those of higher rank. We are not told how he looked—that we might have learned much better from a portrait; but we are told what he did and what he said at various times. We learn how he felt. We hear what other people think of him. Our impression of his character is therefore many-sided and compounded of a thousand different impressions, just as our impression of our friends is. He is apparently a very different person when in the presence of Horatio from what he seems to be when alone and meditating on suicide. A picture could not show him at once irritated, despondent, and companionable. A series of portraits could not be combined into a whole so as to present the picture of a soul. The painter can make his picture powerful only by concentrating his attention on that aspect of the character which appeals to him—that which he understands. He cannot change his point of view, for he looks at his subject pictorially, and his touch is sure only when

his sympathy guides it, when he tries to embody spiritual qualities which are akin to him. The literary portrait shows all sides, the painter one side only. The painter shows his sitter facing the world, with noble thoughts, or at least under some dominant emotion. How can he show him in perplexity or retreat, or when his lower nature asserts itself? He gives us one glimpse behind the curtains that hide the soul; the literary artist gives us many. In fulness and complexity the literary art is far superior to the pictorial art, for its depicting power is continuous, the others momentary. A flash of lightning will not enable us to take our bearings unless we are already familiar with the landscape.

What is called a knowledge of human nature is quite different from artistic appreciation of character. It comes from practical experience of the struggle for existence on the lower plane. It renders one unlikely to be imposed upon by the ordinary tricks and devices of the social and commercial world. The attitude of mental self-defence and suspicion that it induces is protective, but its circle of mental observation is restricted. Appreciation of character, on the contrary, is an artistic power and deals with a wide range of material. The tramp and the criminal may be quite as interesting as the respectable citizen—in fact, they are usually far more so. The landscape artist is insensible to the fer-

tility or arable qualities of the surface of the earth. He looks for lines of force that tell of past history, harmonies or contrasts, lights and shadows, colors with indefinable suggestion, all significant combinations and all elements that refer to the great whole and yet are individual. In the same way the literary artist is interested in the characteristic elements of human nature, and disregards the adventitious and commonplace distinctions between prince and pauper. An acute judgment of the ordinary types of men is a valuable safeguard in life, but insight into the obscure and complicated or abnormal comes from far higher qualities. The first demands an attitude of distrust, the last an attitude of sympathy. But it is singular that men of affairs and practical judgment who possess what is called "a shrewd knowledge of human nature" are easily imposed upon by impostors who are not of the type to which they are accustomed, while the recluse frequently is able to detect the swindler or the charlatan under the most ingenious disguises, although he is not continually on his guard against his fellow-men.

This appreciation of character, for which a certain simplicity and openness seems to be requisite as well as a capacity for understanding elevation of soul, is a power necessary to the actor who is anything more than a mimic. In depicting character, the actor has the advantage over the au-

thor in that he can use, besides the author's words, the powerful instruments of expression, intonation, gesture, attitude, everything which gives a personality physical life, elements that the writer is forced to leave to the imagination of the reader. But the great actor has studied his character and evolved his own conception of it, often far superior to that of the author. Booth's Richelieu was a great personality; Bulwer's, a mere suggestion, a skeleton of lath on which the fustian hung loosely. This is the reason why great actors are so rare. In addition to an unusual combination of physical qualities, the great actor must possess the real insight into character, and a capacity for work and for undergoing excitement without being exhausted. He must both conceive and render the character. Again, his conception must be vivid, but not too delicate, for in the hour or two which is allowed him he cannot bring out the psychological details which the novelist can take his time to portray in his extended narrative. Unfortunately, too, his work is not enduring. It passes away with the dropping of the curtain, and becomes a mere tradition. But while it lasts the actor's presentation has a warmth and living energy that entitles it to be called the creation of a personality in the highest sense. Such is the imperfection of the world that the greatest of all artistic impersonations of life is the rarest and the most fleeting.

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The embodiments of the sculptor are even more restricted than those of the painter, and can only interpret that which myth or tradition or literature has created, but they are at least permanent, and in this there may be some compensation for lack of scope and delicacy in delineating the complexities of human nature.

It will be found on reflection that our impressions of historical character are largely dependent on the literary art. The history which preserves any living image of the notables of the past does so because the historian possesses some of the literary power of conceiving and embodying a character. Dr. Johnson, as he stands for us, is Boswell's Johnson. The Shelley of Trelawney's sketch and Hogg's *Memoirs* cannot be displaced by the vague figure of modern biographers. Motley's William the Silent is strong and real. The Roman emperors live in the pages of Tacitus. We never forget Carlyle's Frederick nor his Cromwell, though the researches of some modern realist may bring out facts, or fragments of fact, not entirely compatible with the conception the great artist embodied. A negative result cannot destroy the power of an artistic creation. Jupiter is still great and Venus fair, because they were once conceived as personalities, and, having once attained ideal existence, they remain immortal.

Again, the preservation in a race or nation by tradition of historical characters bears the same

relation to literary embodiment that folk-lore or folk-ballads bear to literature. There is the same vagueness and the same ideality. The traditional character is doubtless incomplete and in some regards incorrect, since traditions are edited by each generation, and the foot-notes are worked into the text without any regard to accuracy, but simply because they are interesting to the hearers. Therefore those features of the race-hero are preserved which are in harmony with the race-temper. They are fixed in rhyme or chronicle after they have been moulded in the spirit of the primitive epic. This process would go on now in the cases of Washington and Lincoln were it not for the invention of printing and the growth of the exact, scientific spirit. As it is, there is a sort of Lincoln myth growing up even in this exact, realistic age. One can find traces of it in talking with farmers or in reading the daily papers and in the compositions of young men; and there is certainly a Washington myth which resists the realist. The character evolved by this process has traces of grandeur and benignity and is a national product. The man was great and representative by virtue of certain rare qualities. These qualities the people seize on in their imagination, obscuring the common, every-day traits which do not so much appeal to their sympathies. He lives in their consciousness as an ideal figure, as the Jews have made of their Abraham a patri-

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arch favored by God. As we see in folk-lore or in folk-music a naïve striving after nature interpretation, or the germs of primitive ethics, so in the popular embodiment of the national hero we see the yearning for the ideal. These race-embodiments differ from the creations of literature in their breadth and vagueness. They have the power of stirring the imagination of men of the same race, and when an artist takes them up, and fills out the vague outlines with his personal touch, the great heroes of tradition become the greatest figures in literature. Homer alone did not create Achilles, and Henry V. is as much English as Shakespearian. The race-hero has a quality that appeals not to some one set of men, but to all who speak the language, all who recognize the same ethnic bond. The figures of the early kings and demi-gods stand in history as types of nations, preserved by the literary art. Thus the memory of Hebrew David, of the Greek Alexander, of the Roman Cæsar was exalted by the imagination of posterity. The name becomes a war-cry and an inspiration, something by which to conjure up the spirit of dead patriotism. The character thus embodied in the consciousness of the people is often the inspiration to deeds of self-sacrifice, it is made the basis of law and religion. The fact that it is sketched in bold outlines and of superhuman dimensions makes it impressive and easily comprehended. The liter-

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ary portraits, as Tennyson's Arthurian knights or Swinburne's Greek heroes, are apt to be much inferior to the originals. No modern has been able to present a great picture of David or Samuel. But if the modern writer and the hero are of the same blood, sometimes the original is amplified in the national spirit. Shakespeare fails with Julius Cæsar, and makes him but a theatrical figure; but as an Englishman, the traditionary Henry V. appealed to his imagination, so in his drama the king becomes a great English type.

Man has, of course, always been interesting to men, but ancient writers were less struck with the individual than are moderns. In one sense Christianity has enriched human nature, in another it has made it introverted and artificial. Without going into the question, we will assume that Chaucer is the first to depict a character in the modern sense. His people are so lifelike that it is difficult to believe that some of them are not transcripts from actual living persons whom he had known. In the writings of most of his contemporaries the characters are done in a romantic manner and rarely use the language of every-day life, nor are they shown to us in every-day relations. We have characters who represent courage or saintliness or cruelty or bravado. But Chaucer's people are themselves, and act from a definite, full-rounded conception of character in the writer's mind. The description of the Wife of

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Bath tallies exactly with her talk in the linkword, and her story is like her. We get the impression not only of a certain type of bold, coarse-fibred female, but of a certain definite woman of the class. She is not a bad woman, but an energetic, capable, unrefined one, but, above all, she is "Chaucer's Wife of Bath." Chaucer gives us only a sketch of her, but as far as it goes it is consistent and truthful.

We pass from Chaucer to the Shakespearian age. The characters in Mallory's recasting of the Arthurian legends are to some extent individualized, but they are romantic. They do not speak the natural language of men, nor are they concerned about the ordinary activities of life. The poem is far from being a transcript of life or even an interpretation of life, since the artificial motives of chivalry and mystical religion are predominant in the personages represented. They are not from life, but from a three-century dream of life, though the tragedy of Launcelot's and Guinevere's love is conceived truthfully and profoundly. But in the latter part of the sixteenth century human nature seems to have acquired new interest, and in the welding of the farcical, the historical, the pastoral, the mystical, and the amatory elements in the old stage representations into the new drama, men found a literary means of representing all sides of humanity through that most powerful instrument of disclosing char-

acter, the dialogue, as well as the declamatory speech. It is very natural for a man with some imagination, when writing words supposed to be spoken by another, to form some conception of the imaginary speaker and insensibly to fit the words to his conception.

As time went on a set of conventional characters were formed—the villain, the lover, the stage king, the clown, and the like. The writers became more intent on the stage situations, the witty repartee, and the forms and phrases which had been found to be effective on the stage. The audience became more prominent in the author's mind than the speaker. In consequence individuality was lessened and types and "character parts," in which some peculiarity is exaggerated, appear. In the early history of our drama the human personality appealed to the imaginations of writers of genius. Exaggerated presentations of the human will and ambition, as well as of the powers of endurance and forgiveness, were put on the stage. This is especially true of Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*, and Shakespeare's *Richard III.*, in all of which we find characters of superhuman and diabolic energy, but thoroughly alive. These characters, though vigorous, are not finely shaded, and Shakespeare's ability is shown by the fact that as he went on to mastery of his art he was able to fill in these powerful conceptions of human

individuality with an infinite number of details, all springing out of the central dominant characteristic and harmonious with it. This is the more remarkable, as audiences in general are more pleased with powerful exaggeration or mimetic transcripts of something with which they are familiar than with delicate, poetic interpretation of life or character. Probably the great body of the Shakespearian audience were pleased with the poetic imagery and eloquent language of the plays and the succession of pictures presented to their imaginations, but no doubt there were some who perceived with delight the delicate shades and bold contrasts of character in *Hamlet*, or *Twelfth Night*, although such elements had not been made the subject of conscious criticism. But when we read the play of *Hamlet* we find that the interest depends almost entirely on the character of the prince, and that the interest of the poetic passages depends largely on the fact that they are spoken by him or refer to him. A review of a few of Hamlet's speeches will show how very contradictory of each other they are, and yet how they are all harmonious with a complicated and refined yet human character.

In the first place, the tragedy is called *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. This, of course, calls our attention to him as a person of social importance and dignity. In the first act

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we are informed in a mysterious and suggestive manner that something is wrong of sufficient importance to cause the ghost of the late king to appear on earth. The soldiers agree that the matter must be referred to Hamlet. In the next, we have the Danish court on parade. Hamlet appears third in the procession, immediately behind the king and queen. After the despatch of the ordinary court business, Hamlet's uncle, the king, asks him why he is in low spirits. Hamlet answers him rather curtly, evincing either petulance or justifiable aversion. To his mother he replies with respect and consideration. The court retires, leaving Hamlet alone. He expresses his discontent with the world in words which show that his feeling is deep-seated, and he expresses forcibly the very natural aversion which a young man feels for a man who has married his mother soon after his father's death. We see that he is entirely alone in the world. In the next scene, with the three young men of his own age, he discloses another side of his character. Not only is he very high bred and courteous in his manner, but he is very sympathetic. When Horatio describes the apparition of his father's ghost, he becomes much interested, and interested in a perfectly natural manner. His questions are directly to the point. When Horatio says of the appearance of his father's spirit,

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"It would have much amazed you,"

he makes a very singular reply :

"Very like, very like. Stayed it long?"

and goes on with his questions without expatiating on the wonder he would have felt. He is evidently one of those persons who dislike to have their train of thought interrupted, or to receive suggestions from another. We are not surprised to find that he always takes the leadership in conversation, not so much on account of his station, but because his mind is not only very active but is preoccupied with its own activity and removed from the impression of immediate surroundings. In the next scene in which he appears, our impression of his mental isolation is heightened by the fact that he and his friends are outside the castle in the night, and the noise of the drunken revel of the king can be heard within, which suggests the noisy, brutal, sensual, and successful world in contrast to the loneliness of the young man of refinement. It suggests to Hamlet philosophical reflections and remote analogies, which are interrupted by the appearance of the ghost. Hamlet's astonishment is expressed naturally and in the most beautiful words. He at once rises to the occasion, and we discover that he is devoid of physical fear. When he learns from the ghost that his surmises are cor-

rect he dedicates himself to revenge, and in the most absurd and inconsequential manner makes a memorandum to that effect. He never comes any nearer to an action than that. When the young men join him he indulges in untimely jesting, and the sensible Horatio is compelled to say :

“ These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.”

Hamlet's natural courtesy makes him reply :

“ I'm sorry they offend you, heartily ;  
Yes, faith, heartily.”

But he immediately resumes the tone of excited banter, and ends by swearing them all to silence for no good reason, and regrets that a duty is laid on him which a moment before he had solemnly engaged to perform. He foresees that he can relieve the tension under which he is only by irrelevant and incoherent talking, and makes his friends promise not to notice him if he does so.

To his character, disclosed in the first act, Hamlet is true throughout the play. He has lived a happy, full life under the love and protection of his royal father, and never came into direct contact with the world as it is. He is now thoroughly disillusionized. It is evident that he has fallen in love with the girl, Ophelia, and has idealized her in rather a dilettante fashion. He is



disgusted with his mother and disappointed with his love. His mind is very active, and his power of putting thought into language abnormally developed. During the rest of the play he talks and lets things drift. Once, in a blind, spasmodic act, he kills Polonius. In the end, as he is dying, he kills his uncle in much the same way. He has a good opportunity to kill him when he is praying, but invents the excuse for procrastination, that if he killed him then he would go straight to heaven. Had he found him in a drunken sleep he would have found a better excuse for not killing him at that time. There is just one thing he cannot do, and that is, become an assassin. It is not that he has any of the modern sentimental dislike to bloodshed; when he has killed Polonius he is sorry, but not shocked, but he cannot take the life of one of his fellow-men in cold blood. He is always persuading himself that he ought to do so and upbraiding himself for irresolution and resolving to do it, but he simply cannot do it, except in a moment of unreflecting excitement. He is a highly cultured man, in whom the original instinct of race fraternity is abnormally developed, though he is unconscious of it. So we occasionally find a sheriff make all the preparations for an execution, and then prove utterly unable to perform the final act; and, on the other hand, others seem to find a dreadful pleasure in the excitement of taking life. It is not just to say that

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Hamlet has a diseased will because he philosophized about everything. He was a very able man with the poetico-oratorical temperament and without a cowardly drop of blood in his body ; but it proved that he could not commit murder deliberately, though he had every warrant for doing so. He can act promptly enough and even with cruelty in certain directions, but, as is occasionally the case with people we know, there is a line of action which he shrinks from carrying out. Both intellectually and emotionally he is so highly organized that he excites our admiration. But it is evident that the balance is very delicately adjusted, and that it is impossible to predict what he may say or do next, and that at any moment he may become insane. The shadow of that dreadful calamity rests on him, and our sympathy is powerfully aroused for one of our race in mortal danger and partly unconscious of it. Again, it never occurs to him that he might originate a conspiracy, or raise a rebellion which, judging from the readiness with which the Danes join in the emeute with Laertes and from Hamlet's popularity, would probably have been an easy task. But we do not wonder that he never undertakes to do anything of the kind, for he is not that kind of a man we feel quite sure.

Now, although Hamlet is at once vacillating and resolute, philosophical and gifted with shrewd common-sense, moody and cheerfully companion-

able, sublime and ridiculous, we feel, after we have read the play twice, that he is he. When any one says no man ever acted as he did, we feel that it is a complete answer to say, "Hamlet acted so." This is the effect of the literary art of embodying character.

This power was at first confined mainly to the dramatists. The characters in the romances of the period are presented in an unreal and affected manner, though sometimes a poetic sketch is found not without beauty and suggestiveness. Spenser's men and women have little human individuality. The author is more intent on their allegorical significance than on their personality. Milton's creations are on too large a scale to be entirely distinct character conceptions. Satan is a grand figure, but rather a representation of an elemental force than a personal devil like Mephistopheles. But the people in *Pilgrim's Progress* have a delightful reality. Old Mr. Honest, Mr. Worldly Wiseman, Mr. Despondency, and his daughter, Much Afraid, were no doubt drawn directly from people Bunyan knew in English towns, and their conversation has the quality of natural human talk, so that it is more lifelike than it would be if it were exactly reported in dialect. In the next generation Addison created a charming lifelike figure, not very solidly painted, in *Sir Roger de Coverley*—a conglomerate of palpable, external peculiarities—

a sketch of clothes and manners rather than a study of human nature. Sterne casts a much more penetrating glance into the intricacies of human nature, but his attention is caught by the oddities, whimsicalities, and absurdities to be found in English country life, which was then so remote from conventional influences that an individuality might grow into the most amusing eccentricity. Nevertheless, Uncle Toby and his brother struck a root deep in human love. No such living portraits had been sketched since Shakespeare wrote the last line of *The Tempest* and laid down the pen which no one since has been worthy to take up. Goldsmith's Dr. Primrose and his wife are drawn with a hand scarcely less firm and with a realism scarcely less clearly conceived. Both Sterne's and Goldsmith's creations show the unmistakable artist touch, and their slight sketches are conceived in a spirit of love for their fellow-men—a humorous perception of external and acquired peculiarities rather than insight into the springs of action. Scott's broad canvas is covered with figures seen through the romantic mist which then hung over the past, blotting out whatever lies in the shadow and magnifying the prominent features. His peasants, drawn from observation, are clearly portrayed, but his more important characters are not entirely natural. Sometimes they seem a little vague, and occasionally slightly theatrical,

though they rarely fail to be interesting, which, indeed, is the great test of truth. Without alluding to other writers, we may take it for granted that as civilization assumes the modern phase, human nature is becoming more complicated and more interesting to the human race. The nature of women and of children is carefully studied and better understood. More authors seem capable of drawing character. Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, and Hawthorne are great character-artists, and are contemporaneous.

At present two influences militate somewhat against the free exercise of this power. The first is the increasing tendency to rely on conscious analysis, based on observation and to distrust imaginative insight. This is a phase of the exact scientific mental habit of the age. The result is that we have plenty of good, honest work, but little that is creative. If the writer have the power of insight, he must surrender himself to it, and allow it to work without fear of being thought fantastic. Distrust of this faculty is fatal. Audacity gives it scope, and it is a mark of genius to dare and to justify its courage by success. The second is the hurry of the day, which is an indirect result of our labor-saving inventions. A successful writer must keep before the public. But a great character of fiction is the result of thought, conscious and unconscious. The writer must brood over his subject as Shakespeare brood-

ed over *Hamlet*. There is a necessary period between seed-time and harvest. But now, when a man has marketed his first crop, another is demanded at once. So we have innumerable short tales and hasty sketches, photographic reports of talk, dress, and scenery, but few slowly matured studies of humanity. Even so conscientious a writer as Stevenson felt this pressure, and so great an artist as Meredith wrote too much. Meredith conceives human nature on a broad scale. He regards a personality as a centre of opposing forces. He understands that behind the man whom we see lies the man whom we do not see, the soul or character proper, which is sometimes mean, sometimes noble, but always elusive, mysterious, and profoundly interesting. Still, it is possible that if he had produced half as many books they would be four times as valuable. *The Egoist* is a great book, a profound psychological study; so is *Richard Feverel*. But had these great books remained in his mind two years longer, the form would have been more worthy the matter. It may be that Meredith could not be other than he is nor write differently than he has, but his books give the impression of not having been thoroughly matured in the author's mind.

The general conclusions of this brief and imperfect sketch of the development of the great artistic power are: that never before has such

interest been felt in man as now, and that at present literary artists are largely confined to drawing from models, to producing accurate likenesses from observation of men as they appear, not of men as they are, and in consequence are rapidly becoming mechanical and tiresome, though frequently attaining the second level of excellence. The modern standard English novel will very likely be regarded in the next century with the distaste with which we regard *Amadis of Gaul*, or *Le Grand Cyrus*. Men will wonder how their ancestors could have read such uninteresting books, for the novel is the great modern form, and is sure to reach a higher development.

Although the vehicle of the writer is always words, the method in which effects are produced by different masters are quite as unlike as those of a sketch in black and white and a study in color. Every writer has his style in drawing character. Some use description or personal comment, giving us asides or confidential explanations. Others let the character develop itself through conversation. Some keep their characters always in safe situations and rarely allow them to become excited. Others carry them through storm and stress. Some writers are intensely interested in psychological analysis, others in some physical phenomena—beauty, strength, or tricks of manner. All methods shade into

each other, and the same writer may use several in different parts of the same book. Any analysis must therefore be imperfect, and it is difficult to find perfect examples of any one class. In one sense there are as many methods as there are authors.

The two methods which are usually antithesized to each other are spoken of as the romantic and the realistic. Each of these might be subdivided, or other tones might be enumerated, as the heroic, the classic, the statuesque, the familiar, and others, some of the terms referring to method, some to the nature of the subject-matter. In poetry, especially in epic poetry, characters are delineated of superhuman dignity and power, not transcripts of humanity, but compounded of some of the great possibilities of humanity with the weaker parts omitted. The Prometheus of Æschylus and the Brynhild of the Scandinavian Epic, and Milton's Satan are of this nature. They have no direct and complete relation to human life. The day for such character conceptions is past, though they remain as great and as beautiful as ever. They are the vague dreams of the youth of man, and we demand, even in poetry, figures nearer to the type of reality and subject in all regards to the laws of life and death. Even when the romanticist creates a hero in whom he exaggerates capacities for love or hate or endurance, we demand that these quali-



ties be set in a background of the more ordinary ones, and that there be nothing improbable about the combination or impossible in the sequence of circumstances which modify its activity.

Romanticism is a method which results from a certain attitude towards life. Those who are disposed to look for the mysterious and like to feel that there is a providence controlling the steady workings of the laws of nature, and those who have an unbounded admiration for the freedom and the workings of the human will, and rebel at what all feel is human powerlessness and weakness to control the tide of events, all those who cannot bear to feel that men are borne along, rudderless boats on the stream of destiny, turn with pleasure to hear of characters who have achieved the impossible, have run dreadful risks and gone through terrible battles and come out victorious. Novels of this class will always be written and read, but as they depend more on incident and action than on character they do not illustrate our subject. A character drawn in the romantic method is unreal in that it is controlled by a certain set of motives, which, though human, are for the most part in abeyance in the life of ordinary mortals, and are submerged in the struggle for life and consideration which keep all of us within the limits of certain definite and mundane activities. Hawthorne's character draw-

ing is of this nature. The motives which impel his people usually have some direct reference to the moral law or result from its violation. They never fall into the ordinary conventional relations to the world which all must occupy nine-tenths of the time. They become, in consequence, not real people, but symbolical forces in the moral struggle, none the less true on that account, but less like people we have known. At the same time there are combined with this one-sided presentation of character descriptions so very true that we are persuaded of the reality of the characters. The author keeps everything out of sight which does not harmonize with the mood he is delineating. With delicate skill he depicts aspects of outer nature which cast a sidelight on obscure, psychological phenomena as if nature recognized them as real. Zenobia, in the *Blithedale Romance*, is a noble feminine figure. Our sense of her exuberant, warm-blooded, physical life, and her longing for unconventional sincerity, is heightened by a thousand little character touches, until we forget that in reality we know very little about her. We have been allowed to see her only as symbolic of certain elements of womanhood. Beyond that she remains romantic and mysterious.

The wonderful art of Hawthorne is shown by the fact that in him this one-sided, romantic treatment is not in the least theatrical. Although

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his characters are restricted to a certain attitude towards life, they do not seem to be posing. People who assume one attitude are usually tiresome. Some slight awkwardness or betrayal of self-consciousness shows that the attitude is unnatural and suggests to us that a person is not what he seems, that he is playing a part. Nothing is more unpleasant than a suggestion of untruthfulness in art. Even in ordinary life we resent attempts to deceive us, and the most amusing humbug wearies us after a time. But art is essentially veracious. It is a revealing or disclosing by some one who can see more than we, to whose authority we gladly surrender ourselves for the time, and therefore affectation or untruthfulness in art is thoroughly repulsive. Hawthorne's characters are unreal, but by no means untruthful. They do not use the language of ordinary conversation, and are preoccupied with motives and considerations which are remote from ordinary experience. We could make nothing of Donatello or Miriam or Hester Prynne or Arthur Dimmesdale if we met them in real life, but as they appear in Hawthorne's books they are thoroughly consistent to a definite character conception in the author's mind, and it is so evident that their strangeness and remoteness from the actual world proceed from their inner natures, and not from any temporary whim or affectation, that they do not force upon us an unpleasant

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impression of unreality any more than do Shakespeare's Caliban or Ariel.

The method most in vogue at present is the realistic. It is based directly on observation, and attempts to give a transcript of the world as it seems. The characters depicted act from the every-day motives: social ambition, petty jealousy, family affection, desire for wealth or worldly consideration, some fashionable fad of the day, or at most from love of an individual of the opposite sex. They use the ordinary language of conversation, are interested in the questions which are before the public and are subject to the ordinary chances of life. This method is much less liable to fall into exaggerated or impossible representation of life, because it aims to copy faithfully from models. To observe and to narrate observation requires artistic power. The writer must select from the vast mass of fact observed, he must divine at once the salient point. He must make conversation telling and epigrammatic and at the same time like real conversation, not like book discourse. The panorama of life drifts by most of us unheeded, and he who can truthfully reproduce a portion of it is an artist. Even if he does not "invent," his imagination arranges or works over and illuminates fact. Howells, James, and Thackeray see what we see, but seeing, they note, and noting, they can reproduce in a lifelike manner that which is

characteristic. Occasionally they do more, they divine what is beneath the surface. But as a rule realistic art keeps to the appearances, and after reading some of the novels of our day we find that we know the personages as well as and no better than we should if we had lived with them. They remind us of people we have known, and are amusing and entertaining. We get an idea of how they looked and bore themselves in every-day relations. We learn their little individual touches of speech and manner, their superficial prejudices, their class-mark, and the clothes of their soul—the conventional trappings which shield men from the observation of their fellows. But as to how they would act in mortal extremity, we know no more than we know how our living acquaintances whom we have met only in the ordinary social relations would act.

We demand of the artist who draws character something more than we can do for ourselves. We ask to be shown something that we cannot see every day of the week. Under the superficial character of one man lurks the murderer; under that of his neighbor, the martyr. We ask the artist to reveal the hidden springs of action—dormant through many years—unknown to the man himself. How will he act in an emergency? What is his besetting sin? What circumstances can he master and what can master him? In other words, we want a solution of the riddle

which some man is, not merely a restatement of the riddle which is presented to us by every acquaintance. It does not avail much to restate the riddle in neat, epigrammatic language. That is a virtual admission that it is insoluble. But the function of an artist is to hazard at least a guess at the mysterious. When we know an acquaintance thoroughly, when we have been through real danger or real sorrow with him and get beneath the surface and find there is something in which we can put confidence—then we have a friend. We take an infinite comfort from him, we feel respect. So it is with the characters of fiction. The society of Hamlet is a stimulant and a solace. Macbeth and Othello are interesting because we have seen them under strain. No doubt Mr. Howells's people would be so, too, if only we knew them better than they will let us. But the same thing is true of them that is true of the people we meet every day—either there is very little in them, or, what is more probable, they keep a great deal back. Realism is too simple a method to do full justice to such complicated subjects as human character and human society. It cannot render even the surface truthfully. A blue-print may repeat the lines of a mechanical drawing accurately, but a blue-print of life is not art and is not nature. The phrase "to report fact" has a scientific sound, but what is fact? There is the external fact as you and I

see it, about which we should probably disagree. Then there is the fact as genius sees it, entirely different from the fact as we saw it ; then the fact behind the fact which genius divines. To report an isolated fact truthfully may be possible, but to report a series of facts which reflect character is an entirely different matter. They are too numerous to be tabulated, consequently only a very small proportion can be reported. Everything depends on the selection made and the order in which they are presented. Genius seizes on the significant ones and arranges them in a certain succession so as to create a certain impression ; repeats one of them over and over, and suppresses the general body of events that result from the simple reactions of a mind on its environment. Realism is apt to make too much of the power of the environment in shaping the character to a nerveless determinism, and romanticism is prone to over-estimate the power of the human will. Exaggerated realism is decidedly preferable to exaggerated romanticism, because it is simply commonplace ; the latter is false and ridiculous.

Great character-artists, like Shakespeare or George Eliot or Meredith, cannot be confined to either method. In *Henry V.*, whenever the king is speaking as king he assumes the heroic style and uses blank-verse only. Both his sentiments and his words are noble and elevated, as becomes

a king of England. But when he is disguised as a private soldier, he talks to the soldiers he meets in the most delightfully realistic manner. Again the accessories and atmosphere may be romantic and the characters drawn with startling realism. Thus in *Hamlet* we have a mysterious ghost, a castle, a court, all of these vague and shadowy, calling on the imagination for much exercise; then the realistic figures—Horatio, Polonius, and the rest—for, although they speak for the most part in blank-verse, the movement of their minds is simple and natural. Indeed, when they do use verse it has much of the movement of conversation.

If the romantic method is exaggerated we have caricature. If some peculiarity is isolated and continual attention is called to it, we end by having in our minds a grotesque figure, physical and mental. Nearly all of the characters of Dickens are of this nature. He has the art to select amusing peculiarities and a never-failing fund of high spirits in presenting them, otherwise the antics of his grotesque creations would become painful after a few appearances. As it is his character drawing is very primitive, and his books depend for their popularity on other qualities. Balzac, too, is a caricaturist, but he seizes on some abnormal moral development, and his characters have a terrible and fascinating power. He caricatures demons. Dickens caricatures men and



women—very ordinary men and women. Balzac is a man. Dickens is a sentimentalist. Balzac is a pessimist, Dickens an optimist, asserting that the world is all right—even the rogues so amusing as to be indispensable—yet their methods are the same—the method of intensifying the striking peculiarity. Both, too, are realists up to a certain point—that is, the description of externals—yet even in that their tendency to exaggerate is evident.

George Eliot is one of the great character-artists. She has power of observation and can report fact. She has insight and can illuminate fact. She first discovered that children have childlike characters. Maggie and Tom Tulliver are the first children in literature. Dickens's children act like children, but resemble children just as his grown people resemble men and women. We must feel a liking for Miss Edgeworth's wholesome little English girls and boys, although they embody not much more than the ideal of the conscientious nursery governess. But George Eliot's children are young human beings. Her principal characters have both reality and power. Dorothea Brooke is a noble creature, a great woman, capable of devotion and self-sacrifice, capable, too, of sustaining others. Her nature is on broad and simple lines, yet we understand it. We know Dorothea and are the better for it. Grandcourt in *Daniel Deronda* is another great

creation, the thoroughly conscienceless man, so hard and cruel that we are afraid of him. There is hardly one of George Eliot's characters that is not well drawn, though not always so well conceived as those we have mentioned. Daniel Deronda himself seems to be the only conspicuous failure. In him the artist seems a little uncertain, or not quite able to realize her conception. It was a very difficult character to draw—full of complicated impulses, ancestral and acquired. George Eliot is a realist with insight into human nature, with insight not merely into one region but into many regions of the heart and soul of man. We may have rather too many epigrams, a little too much philosophic reflection on human nature and human society, but when the people come in they talk, they are real people, not the lay-figures of the logician nor the puppets of the wit.

The greatness of this power in any one artist is measured by three things: first, the clearness of his figures, that which gives them life and individuality; second, the range of characters; third, the number. In all of these points Shakespeare's pre-eminence is marked. All of his figures have individuality—their words and acts proceed from a human heart, of the nature of which the writer has a clear notion. We can hardly doubt that Falstaff was as real to him as Ben Jonson, or Romeo as William Herbert. In range he passes

over the entire field of human nature, including both sexes, all ages, and conditions, noting ethnic peculiarities in his Roman plays or the barbaric petulance of the Celt in *Lear*. He even passes below the lower limit of the human in *Caliban*. He brings out the essential elements of character, giving the conventional and the adventitious their proper subordinate place. In number it may be that he is exceeded by Balzac and Scott, but in variety and individuality no one equals him. Leaving out the strictly subordinate characters, there are in the plays of undoubted Shakespearian authorship two hundred and forty-six distinctly marked personalities, an intellectual product far superior to that accomplished by any other man that ever lived. The number is made up by counting only those which have in the reader's mind a distinct individuality, and omitting the following plays entirely: *Richard III.*, *Timon of Athens*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Henry VIII.*, and the three parts of *Henry VI.*, either by reason of some doubt of Shakespeare's entire authorship or because his manner of sharply outlining a character and definitely filling it out is not evident in them. Duplicate characters are not counted except *Henry V.*, who appears first as a youth, then as a man.

In clearness and individuality of her characters George Eliot is hardly inferior to Shakespeare. Her personages are well rounded out human fig-

ures, though lacking in the full, rich human nature of Shakespeare's. But they are confined to the genus Englishman of the early nineteenth century, with the exception of the fifteenth century Italians in *Romola*, and do not embrace types of the man universal. They are insular and contemporaneous. This must be true of any thorough-going realist who depends for raw material on the world about him. Observation is very apt to hold a writer on the outer surface of character. It is the accumulated observation of the past, the observation of thoughtful men of all ages stored up in old books, that lets us beneath the surface, that shows us all varieties of men, not merely the modern of our streets and fields. In affluence George Eliot is not remarkable. *Middlemarch* is a broad canvas, but it is not very closely crowded. The figures are all carefully painted. If any criticism is made of the book it might be charged with lack of unity of interest, Lydgate being almost as interesting as Dorothea herself. There are four distinct love affairs, besides the parody of Mr. Casaubon's courtship. *Middlemarch* contains twenty-two distinct figures, enough to make the fortune of any novelist—enough, in fact, to furnish four distinct narratives if economized in the Trollope manner.

Taking all of George Eliot's books, the characters number one hundred and seven, against

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forty of Thackeray's and one hundred and two of Dickens's. In Thackeray and Eliot we include only those which evince conception, thought, and study on the part of the writer. The large number of characters credited to Dickens cannot be taken as any certain criterion of mental work, and many of Thackeray's slight sketches of servants and persons who appear but once or twice and are excluded from his list, are admirable as far as they go. Just as an artist of talent can fill a sheet with grotesque faces in an hour without fatigue and without the exercise of much invention, whereas an artist of genius might require weeks of careful labor, reflection, and thought before he could transfer to his canvas the image that arises before him, haunting, yet elusive, so there is no reason why Dickens should not multiply his sketches *ad infinitum*. Of course great talent is necessary to this rapid outlining of personal peculiarities—all amusing, all slightly different, all contorted, and bearing about as much resemblance to character as Mr. Palmer Cox's quaint Brownies do to portraits.

One of the points in which the artist in words has an advantage over the artist in pigments is that the former can show the character developing under the pressure of circumstance. The limits of the drama, it is true, confine it to the unfolding of an elemental passion. The action must rush on tumultuously. Romeo must fall in

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love, kill Tybalt, taste the bitterness of exile, pass from happiness to despair and suicide in the space of a week, but there is no break between the personal identity of the Romeo of the first act and the Romeo of the fifth act. Ambition takes possession of the loyal soldier, Macbeth. He became treacherous, murderous, gloomy, desperate, till his human nature seems to have left him. But Macbeth, the soldier, is the same person as Macbeth, the unbearable tyrant. His nature merely expands under our eyes like some tropical flower. He is potentially a criminal when he crosses the blasted heath, and from the first says and does nothing inconsistent with the principle that when the circumstances are favorable a man deteriorates with such rapidity that we say he has changed, though we know he is the same. The novelist has, of course, a more ample field than the dramatist. George Eliot can follow Tom and Maggie Tulliver from childhood to their tragic deaths. The fair young souls open under natural influences. So Thackeray takes young Pendennis from childhood to manhood, noting the effect on him of each of the influences that mould the character of the English boy, prominent among them, as is natural, the mother's love. The inferiority of the grasp of Dickens on human life is shown in David Copperfield, who remains unreal among the strikingly realistic scenes in which he moves, and is un-

developed from boyhood to manhood, though he is constantly calling attention to the changes that are going on in him. This noting the development of a character is one of the highest elements of the art. It is difficult enough to depict a character fully complete and rounded, but to trace the coming to the surface of hidden qualities, the gradual deterioration under the stress of circumstances, as George Eliot has done in Tito Melema, or the influence of a great passion or of another strong character, as in Macbeth, is infinitely more difficult, and to trace the gradual unfolding of the youth into the man is hardly less so. We may note a splendid example in Shakespeare's *Henry V*. In the young Prince Henry may be discerned something of the masterful temper, the energy, and the intellectual acuteness that distinguish the heroic king. There is a disposition towards practical jesting and a soldierly *bonhomie* combined with a sense of personal dignity in both. Henry, the prince, plots with Poins to rob Falstaff. Henry, the king, passes himself off as a private on the soldiers Bates and Williams. The tone of the moralizing in the scene when Prince Hal says to Poins,

"By my troth, I do now remember the poor creature, small beer. But indeed these humble considerations make me out of love with my greatness,"

is radically the same as that in the scene in *Hen-*

ry V., when the king, in his assumed character of private soldier, says to Bates :

"I think the king is but a man as I am : the violet smells to him as it doth to me ; all his senses have but human conditions : his ceremonies laid by, in his nakedness he appears but a man ; and though his affections are higher mounted than ours, yet when they stoop, they stoop with the like wing. Therefore when he sees reason of fears, as we do, his fears out of doubt be of the same relish as ours are."

The youth is the father of the man. His disposition to look in a practical way at the contradictions of the world and not attempt any solution has developed. In both cases his executive energy soon asserts itself. He turns with great zest in the first instance to carrying out a plan to shame Falstaff, and in the second, to making everything ready for the battle with the French.

It is surprising in how few words a great artist can make a character reveal itself. Hamlet speaks thirteen hundred and twenty-seven lines in a play of three thousand seven hundred and forty lines, and speaks three hundred and forty-six times. But we receive a definite impression of Ophelia, who speaks but forty-five times, and but one hundred and sixty-five lines in all. Hamlet is, of course, a more complex character than Ophelia, and needs more room in which to display



his intellectual affluence ; but a negative character, like Ophelia, is a very difficult one to draw. The wreck of Lear's royal nature needs six hundred and fifty-seven lines and one hundred and eighty-three speeches for its representation. The entire play extends to thirty-two hundred and fifty lines ; but Cordelia, in the beginning of the play, has but twelve speeches and forty-eight lines given her, and then she is withdrawn. In the fifth act she reappears and speaks eighteen times. In all, but one hundred and eighteen lines are given to this embodiment of noble, loving, gracious womanhood. Yet the result is that Cordelia is no less real and complete a figure than Lear himself. It is true that Cordelia is referred to by others several times, and that we judge her partly by the place she holds in her father's heart. Further, she is intensified by contrast. In the first scene we see her only as a high-spirited girl, perhaps slightly too uncompromising, and so disgusted by the sycophantic hypocrisy of her sisters that she disdains to enter into any comparison with them, and severs the family bond rather than parade her feelings in public. She retires, and the repellent heartlessness of Goneril and Regan covers the successive scenes with the blackness of hell. On this background Cordelia appears for a moment, a radiant angel of love, and then is murdered. The effect is overpowering. We receive an impression of the

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possible depths of tenderness that we can never forget—and it is made by some three or four hundred words.

That Shakespeare keeps his heroes on the stage so much of the time and allows his women to talk so little may possibly be due to the practical reason that an excellent actor, whose capabilities and appearance were in his mind as he wrote, could take one part and the other must be intrusted to boys. But it certainly shows how genius can economize its material or be lavish with it, and yet produce the great effect. Cordelia and Ophelia are not outline sketches, nor in any real sense subordinate figures. Merely outlining or suggesting accessory personages to the central group is a different matter from the full presentation of a personality. In this suggesting the supernumeraries the artist's tact and skill, rather than his penetration and genius, are factors. George Eliot and Dickens are especially happy in filling their background with minor figures. They come in on every chapter and are dismissed, but number more than the full-length portraits. In *King John*, a servant, James Gurney, appears. He speaks but once, and only four words. Coleridge said that these four words, "Good leave, good Philip," said to his master, Philip Faulconbridge, were precisely the ones to portray the respectful familiarity of a faithful old servant to his young master. This seems to

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be carrying the maxim that "Shakespeare can do nothing but right" too far.

A question arises how far illustration by engravings aids a reader in forming a vivid conception of the characters presented in a novel. Doubtless, the two arts—the pictorial and the literary—can aid one another. Doubtless, pictorial illustrations are, up to a certain point, an aid to the imagination. Whether they aid our imaginations in the right way is another question; whether it is well to have the imagination aided in that way is still another. It is safe to say that as a rule illustrations are not desirable, unless it be in books for children, both because they are rarely artistically competent, and because they create a sluggish habit of mind. Certainly no one cares to read an illustrated Shakespeare or Dante or Don Quixote. It is hardly possible for any one to illustrate Browning's *The Ring and the Book* or the *Blot in the 'Scutcheon* or *Pippa Passes* adequately. Some persons readily form a visual image in their mind, and can call up in their memories the exact features of their friends, and yet have a very vague and meagre conception of character. Others have a lively and vivid impression of the personalities of their friends, but cannot summon up an image of their forms or features. The literary art of drawing character appeals to this last power. It does not aim at creating exact conceptions of the bodies or

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forms of material things. It is not of the slightest consequence how Romeo looked, nor what was the height or weight of Caliban. Such matters are the affair of the painter. The great painter cannot be a great literary artist. The visions one sees crowd out the visions the other sees. If Shakespeare had possessed the knack of drawing, it is not probable that he could have written *As You Like It*. The artist who illustrates and the artist who writes a book must be in accord. They must see men and things from the same stand-point. They must rise to equal heights. The only way for them to do this—unless they chance to be spiritual duplicates, or unless the writer be dominant and the illustrator wonderfully receptive—is for both of them to look at the subject-matter from the same conventional stand-point, and relegate the higher and more individual qualities of the imagination to the background. But unless the creative imagination is unhampered there will be no fine and delicate art. When the author makes his own drawings, there will be a substantial harmony of interpretation in illustrations and text. Thackeray and Du Maurier are examples of this, but the questions may well be asked is Du Maurier's text much more than an explanation of his pictures, and would not Thackeray have been greater as a writer if he had not amused himself with drawing?

This power of clearly conceiving character and transferring the conception to the pages of a book, so that the intelligent reader receives the pleasure which a work of art gives, is one of the marks of genius. It was given to Charlotte Brontë, to Jane Austen, and to George Eliot, and to Thackeray, Hawthorne, and Meredith. Genius is independent of sex, and so is the capacity of apprehending the work of genius—in fact, it is the test of genius that its work should be universally apprehended. It is true that men are apt to idealize women and women to idealize men, yet the worst woman of modern English fiction, Becky Sharp, is the creation of a man, and the worst men—Tito Melema and Henleigh Grandcourt—are the creations of a woman. It would seem as if the ability to understand and interpret nobility and unselfishness carried with it the power of conceiving the antithesis of nobility and unselfishness. Certainly human nature cannot be apprehended unless we know that it has vast reach far beyond the power of circumstance to develop or of heredity to transmit. Most of us lead sheltered lives. We do not come in contact with crime. We are hedged in by a wall of convention, which hides human nature from our view. In this world spirit flits by spirit, but the faces of all are masked. Most of these masks have the same vacant, unreal expression. The fixed grimace of society hides the real man and woman.

We become sometimes dreadfully weary of these masks, and long to know a true person. The literary artist who merely comments on the peculiarity and ingenuity of these masks, who reports external fact—although he may do it with great liveliness and humor—soon becomes tiresome. He is read eagerly for a while to see if he has anything real to say, and then thrown aside. The artist who removes this mask, it may be for a moment only, and gives us a glimpse of a real person, renders us a service by showing us that humanity is as interesting and varied as nature. He who shows us that we live in a world of spirits and not merely of forms, treats of matters on which man's curiosity is inexhaustible, and each generation reads his book with eagerness; for his subject-matter is forces which are eternal, and not phenomena, which are transient. The one may amuse; the other teaches.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WRITER'S PHILOSOPHY.

A MAN is continually receiving impressions and reacting on them. He receives impressions from inanimate nature, from living things, and from books. The reaction is modified by numerous postulates and axioms, principles that he unconsciously takes for granted. Some of these principles have been born with him—they belong to the race or family of which he is a member; others he has acquired from experience and education. They weaken and limit or reinforce each other in countless ways. Among them are love of truth, love of beauty, regard for the opinions of others, regard for personal comfort, loyalty to humanity at large, loyalty to the nation, and many other primary impulses which appear in many different forms and make up a complex of tendencies which color all judgments and criticisms of life. For want of a better term we may term this complex of tendencies, so far as it influences a man's writings, the writer's philosophy. As far as it influences a man's conduct we call it his character;

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but a man with a pen in his hand, expressing his impressions of the world and of men, is in many ways so different from the same man in contact with the real world that we are justified in using the two terms. As a rule, the ethical standard of the writer is higher than that which he aims to reach in practical life. Francis Bacon is often named as an example of this inequality. But in many cases the rule does not hold good, and the writer is better than his books would lead us to suppose he (or she) is.

Another view may make more clear what is meant by "the writer's philosophy." An artistic production is a compromise between two influences or between two views of life. One of these is the world as the writer sees it, and the other the world as he thinks it ought to be; or, one is the world as it seems, and the other is the world as he thinks it really is. The writer transfuses his report of appearances with his conception of the ideal, sometimes he translates it into terms of the ideal. To every man the world as he sees it depends on his physical organization and upon the way he has been taught to look at it through education and years of experience. His ideal depends partly upon his education, but more on his intimate and innate disposition. His artistic production, being an attempt to reconcile these or to emphasize the contrast between them, is colored by both his feeling for the world as it

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seems and his conception of the world as it ought to be. This notion of the world as it ought to be, or as he would like it to be, is substantially the result of the man's radical, unconscious principles, and may, without violence to the ordinary usage, be termed the writer's philosophy.

The word "philosophy" in this sense has no reference to the metaphysical doctrines a man has learned or the religious creed he professes. These are held consciously, and as far as a man writes with them definitely in view, so far his work tends to fall outside of the class of artistic productions. It is the doctrine or creed on which a man acts, not that which he professes, which characterizes his literary product. A man may claim to be a pessimist, and yet be at the bottom kindly and hopeful. Another may regard the world as a playground, and yet adhere to Calvinistic theories; another may regard it as a battlefield, and profess to be an Epicurean; one man may say with conviction "all men are liars," and yet at the bottom hold to the sacredness of the spoken word; another may talk about the trustworthiness and perfectibility of man, and yet in reality regard truth as a convention to be respected only so far as it holds society together—in fact, be radically a false person. But the underlying quality of a man's mind pervades his work, no matter how he tries to make prominent his conventional creed, metaphysical or religious.

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Sincerity and simplicity of interpretation characterize true art, and these demand that a man express himself in accordance with his true nature. In fact, a man cannot keep his real character out of his work. He may call himself a "realist" or a "veritist," but as soon as he begins to "report fact" we find that his report is colored by the inner nature of the man. He would not be an artist at all were it not. In fact, his consciously held theory of realism is of about as little consequence as his religious creed or lack of one. It determines his method only, whereas the real worth of character and distinction of his work depends largely on his unconscious philosophy.

In general treatment and style some writers manage to convey a more vivid impression of themselves than others do. In some cases the individuality of a writer seems to pervade his work, in others he seems more aloof and reserved and impersonal. In Stevenson's and in Charles Lamb's essays we seem to come into contact with quaint and delightful companions. It is impossible not to feel friendly to them. This is not due to the writer's philosophy, but to his possession of a confidential and friendly disposition. This affects his manner, the other his underlying thought. He indulges in confidential remarks as if talking with a friend instead of keeping in the background and letting his characters make

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the advances. Thackeray rather overdoes the direct address to the reader in some cases. But whatever the manner, the writer's philosophy gives substance to his work even if he adopt the tone of banter or persiflage, and whether he write drama or history. It even affects lyrics, as is evident from the very different effects produced by Heine's or by Longfellow's songs. There is very great charm in personal manner, but the radical attitude or stand-point of the mind, though correlated with manner, is an entirely different thing, and it is of that we wish to speak.

This philosophical substratum of the mind, or, more strictly speaking, the soundness of it, is in the full sense no part of the literary equipment; it is not, strictly speaking, a literary power. A man may be quite indifferent to right and wrong, he may even hold erroneous ideas about duty—he may not look below the surface of things and yet be a great artist. As far as we can make out, the world was to Francis Villon simply a place in which to enjoy the lusts of the flesh at some one else's expense; the moral law, something to be broken as often and as unreflectively as possible; society, something to be preyed on; life, no more than the days of the Carnival. But so keenly does he feel the transitoriness of all this and the discomforts of physical misery, with such a diabolic gayety does he put his feelings in verse, that he has given us a glimpse of extraor-

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dinary vividness into the life and heart of the French vagabond criminal. His work is art, but we can hardly say that he has any philosophy, unless we should say that it consisted in a total lack of sound principle. Again, Swift is a thorough pessimist at the bottom, although a professing, and no doubt sincere, Christian. But Swift's work is entitled to be called great, great in breadth and vigor if not in sanity and balance. Strictly speaking, the literary art has nothing to do with right or wrong or with just and unjust; it simply presents. Nevertheless, sanity, balance scope, and justness of view add to the literary product something which, if not absolutely literary or artistic, is ennobling. Art gives to thought form and concrete body, but the tone of the thought, the writer's philosophy, may properly be considered as a substratum or foundation, or, rather, a governing and characteristic element of the work. Its consideration should be one of the elements of literary criticism. It seems impossible to care for the presentation and to ignore one great characteristic of the thing presented. We therefore include the writer's philosophy or his general attitude towards life, his temperament, both ethical and æsthetic, in an outline of literary criticism.

Chaucer's philosophy is of a sane, practical mind. Nature is delightful, but it is the quiet, reposeful nature of southern England. That the

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sea or the storms or any exhibition of great force attracted or excited his imagination I can nowhere find. Men and women are entertaining. His idea of virtue is temperance, courage, fidelity to comrades. He hates a cheat or a coward. He has a great deal of tolerance for the faults of others, because men are so interesting to him that he can forgive a good deal of vulgarity for the sake of the unadulterated human nature it illustrates. He detests a hypocrite, especially one who trades in virtue or religion; but it seems to be with an artistic quite as much as an ethical hatred that he regards hypocrisy. He makes his villains physically repulsive, and dangerous only to dupes of little discernment. The profound selfishness and cruelty of Iago covered with an exterior of soldier-like frankness is beyond his horizon. He does not scrutinize moral phenomena very closely, nor does the misery of men condemned to a life of hopeless toil oppress his imagination. He is not weighed down by the unsolvable problem of evil. The world-vision of his contemporary, Langland, is colored by the thinker's sadness. Langland's image of the world is a "fair field full of folk, of all manner of man—the mean and the rich, working and wandering." Some, putting their hands to the plough, "played full seldom," and labored hard in producing what "gluttons destroyed in riotous excesses." His imagination is full of the thought that greed,

deceit, and selfishness are more successful and more honored than humble, honest industry, which is so often condemned to a life of privation and misery. Chaucer does not dwell on the aspect of the world, which seems hard and cruel and wrong. He does not fill his heart with bitterness. His philosophy is sane, but limited. It is to a large extent "here and now." He comments on what he sees with reference to immediate consequences and causes. I need not say that he comments with delightful piquancy and thorough artistic finish. That is not the question. The poets of a wider philosophy grow serious over deeper-seated causes and the triumphs of wrong in dark places. Their value lies in their power of widening our horizon, of grouping all things under universal laws. Chaucer's delight in nature is naïve, unaffected, charming. It is usually the minute beauties that lie under our eyes that he calls us to admire. Thus he says of the daisy, which is so closely associated with his name:

"Of all flowers in the mede,  
Then love I most these flowers white and red,  
Such as men call daisies in our town.  
To them have I so great affection,  
As I said erst, when comen is the May,  
That in my bed there daweth me no day  
Than I n' am up and walking in the mede  
To see this flower against the sunne sprede.

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When it up riseth early by the morrow,  
That blissful sight softeneth all my sorrow."

Of hell he says :

"A thousand times I have heard men tell  
That there is joy in heaven and pain in hell.  
And I accord it well that it is so ;  
But natheless yet wot I well also  
That there is none dwelling in this countree  
That either hath in heaven or in hell y be,  
Ne may of it none other ways witten,  
But as he heard, said, or found it written,  
For by assay there may no man it prove."

His philosophy is, Do not speculate on the unknown. Here is an extremely interesting world before our eyes. The men and women in it are far more entertaining than angels, and presumably less hateful than devils. At all events, we know much more about them. Let us talk about them, and smile or weep with them. Each one is a study for a few moments. Chaucer says, with a bright smile : "Let us join the party riding to Canterbury, and hear them chat. By Canterbury I do not mean human destiny. I mean a real town. My pilgrims are not people oppressed by a heavy sense of responsibility and making a journey of expiation. They are not like Signor Dante or Master Langland. They are like you and me, making a journey partly because it is spring and it irks them to stay in

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the city; partly because it is the thing to do; partly because there is some notion of propitiating in a decorous manner a saint who might be a useful friend in sickness, but principally because others are going. This party will amuse us, and you need not be afraid of being preached at. It happens every year. Come; I will tell you all about their sayings and how they looked."

But a man is not the less a poet because he can look at the world in a simple, hearty way and not find dark places and hard sayings and mystic parallelisms everywhere. The world is not all inaccessible mountains and vast deserts lying in the gloom of midnight. There are many charming landscapes which can be caught in the circle of the eye, with every detail of which we can become familiar, which bring rest and satisfaction to the soul. "'Tis not well to live in perpetual gloom about what lies beyond the horizon." Still, as we must go and find out some day, we can hardly refrain from speculating about the country "lying east of the sun and west of the moon."

When we come to Shakespeare we find a mind of extraordinary catholicity. He has no particular views to maintain, any more than nature has, but he can assume the point of view of characters radically different. The writers of the age were much given to philosophizing, or to commenting epigrammatically upon man and nature. The religious discussions of the day and the change

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in the general conception of the relation of the world to the universe, brought about by the conviction that the earth was an unsupported ball and surrounded by limitless space, gave a zest to speculation. The number of philosophical apothegms found in Shakespeare's plays is a mark of the age rather than of the man. The profundity of many of them, and the beauty of form into which others are cast, arises from the fact that Shakespeare as a thinker was profound, and as an artist representative rather than from the individual bent of his mind. It is Hamlet that says :

"There is nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so ;"

and Hamlet that argues about suicide, and declares that the uncertainty about the hereafter—"what dreams may come" to disturb unconscious sleep—is the main reason against making a man's "quietus with a bare bodkin." It is Hamlet who thinks the world "a sterile promontory," and Hamlet is not Shakespeare ; he is only a part of Shakespeare. When Macbeth says, with conviction, that he would "jump the life to come," we have no right to conclude that Shakespeare's creed was "risk all for ambition ; we know so little of a future state that it is useless to regulate conduct by any consideration of its effect on us after we are dead," for Macbeth is a fatalist. Claudio shrinks with unreasoning terror from

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death, and is willing to sacrifice his sister's honor for a few more days of his cowardly life, and shrieks, writhing in abject terror :

"Ay, but to die and go we know not where;  
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;  
This sensible, warm motion to become  
A kneaded clod ; and the delighted spirit  
To bathe in fiery floods or to reside  
In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;  
To be imprisoned in the viewless winds  
And blown with restless violence round about  
The pendent world ; or to be worse than worst  
Of those that lawless and uncertain thoughts  
Imagine howling! 'Tis too horrible!  
The wearied and most loathed worldly life  
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment  
Can lay on nature, is a paradise  
To what we fear of death.  
. . . Sweet sister, let me live!  
What sin you do to save a brother's life  
Nature dispenses with the deed so far  
That it becomes a virtue."

From this we can infer, not that Shakespeare regarded death as a door into a region of nameless horror, but that he knew how a nerveless, physical coward and a soul wrapped up in self felt in the presence of death, and could embody in words its agony of apprehension.

It is not from expressions put into the mouth of imagined characters—imagined so clearly that

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they speak from their own natures, not as reflections of their creator, that we can judge Shakespeare's philosophy. It is rather from the general conduct of his plots, which, though taken from current literature, are usually modified in their conduct and outcome by the dramatist, that we can estimate his way of looking at men and history.

In examining Shakespeare's plots we see that law rules in them as it does in nature. We see that men are free agents, and that their conduct is followed by certain inevitable consequences, that character develops along the line of least resistance, that the single life may be thwarted, wasted, sacrificed uselessly, but the life of the state, of humanity, moves on towards better things; that in the everlasting conflict between good and evil forces the triumph of the evil is temporary and the centuries are on the side of righteousness, though the years be evil and the days full of the triumphs of the evil-doers. The author is wise. Though he looks deeply into life he looks at it as a whole. His estimate of life is not partial. No subordinate principle governs in his mimic world but the universal laws established, "not for an age, but for all time."

We will not attempt to support these positions *seriatim*—the author needs no labored vindication. Those who know Shakespeare will feel that they are true. Shakespeare knew that vice is attractive, fatally attractive sometimes, but

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the regal beauty of Cleopatra, undisputed "queen of all manner of deliciousness," intoxicating to the hearts of men, is weak compared to the girl Miranda, who, though as ideal as Ariel, is as real as truth itself. Hamlet is a type of irresolution, and when an irresolute will is brought face to face with the stern necessity of events disaster must follow. The irascible Lear surrenders his control of the external world to two demons. Nothing but ruin can come from this stupendous folly involving the innocent and the loyal, and jeopardizing the framework of society. Macbeth yields to the temptations of ambition and commits an awful crime. He is successful, and obtains a position for which he is in every way fitted. But crime begets crime, a crime against society must be buttressed by crimes against individuals until Scotland seems lost. All these sequences of events are natural and profoundly true. No *deus ex machina* relieves men from the embarrassments of their acts or of their weakness and folly. But in the end things right themselves. A tragedy is the collision of forces, rooted in self, with eternal law. The self perishes, the law endures. When Claudius and Hamlet are dead the resolute soldier Fortinbras is chosen king, and we foresee that the honest, practical Horatio will be his chief counsellor. The desperate Macbeth is killed, and the thanes who fled from him proclaim Malcolm as king. In *Lear* the loving Cordelia is sac-

rified, but Kent and the King of France and Edgar are victorious and ready to sustain the civil order. In each case the tragedy is an interruption in the moral order of the world. Now, it is true that in history the recovery is not so rapid. The effects of a course of crime last through many years before they are worn out. Nevertheless, there is a slow amelioration. The successful criminal is often prosperous, and dies full of years and honors and is buried 'neath a "star-pointing pyramid." The consequences of his crimes against society are not reversed, possibly, for several generations. But in the end these consequences melt into the stream of events, the tide is overflowed by the great secular currents. In the mimic presentation of life called the drama, there is no space to overlook centuries. But so profound was Shakespeare's conviction of the tendency of this great law, that, in the interest of philosophic truth and regardless of artistic effect, he can never refrain from giving a hint of the world's recuperative powers instead of dropping his curtain on a scene of hopeless gloom and discouragement. This instinct is based on a profound philosophical conception and is in harmony with the "law within the law."

To pass to writers who deal with lesser matters, we may notice that a common fault is to represent the little section of life and the little group of persons presented by the novelist as the en-

tire world, and the motives which govern them as the mainsprings of society. Thus Zola's *La Terre* and *L'Assommoir* represent a group as governed entirely by sordid and selfish motives. No one who has come into contact with any members of the debased and criminal class can doubt that there are such groups. No one can read these books without acknowledging their power—a power heightened, perhaps, by the fact that they are unrelieved—that it is one abnormal development of life that is presented. But if a treatise on physiology should describe tumors, cancers, and abscesses, ignoring the organs of a healthy body entirely, it would be at the least inadequate, no matter how accurately it might report minute observation and delicate experiment. So a treatise on social disease is inadequate which fails to take into account the recuperative powers of society, which ignores the fact that crime and selfishness, like disease, are destructive and end in death to the individual, but only temporary deterioration to society. This inadequate representation of human life proceeds from the lack of a sane philosophy in the writer. It makes a book gloomy, unsatisfactory, pessimistic, pagan, even though its literary power be of a high order. In shorter productions, like the lyric for example—which presents a mood or a single incident, and is professedly dominated by a temporary emotion—this one-sidedness is no fault, but in a book there

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must be some grasp of things as they are, of the principles which, though they work slowly, work ceaselessly. Events and characters must be shown in relation to the great whole as well as in relation to their immediate surroundings. Not that there should be a constant moralizing or expressions of disgust on the part of the author. On the contrary, he should attend to the matter in hand and "report fact." But when the principal fact which he reports in describing the broad path that leads to destruction is that there is absolutely no other path for men to travel over, we say that an untrue philosophy has marred his work. And the more lifelike his work is in other respects—in matters of detail—the more will this great defect be felt.

Young men are apt to generalize hastily from too few observations. If they have real power they fill out these early generalizations and pass to a broader view of life. Years bring the philosophic mind. There is not wanting evidence in his great work, *The Downfall*—evidence that M. Zola is able to profit by his graduate course in life. The book is a great object-lesson on the truth that institutions which have not developed under the natural workings of the true social instincts of a nation, but are based on individual selfishness and the ignorance and vainglory of the people, drift steadily towards a catastrophe, and that the impulse of temporary self-preservation

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impels the officials under such mock institutions to actions which hasten the catastrophe. The mammon of unrighteousness never deserts its friends, however much they would like to get rid of its fatal attendance. The drift of events in this book is shown to be determined by the radical unsoundness of the official society of the Second Empire, that resulted of necessity in the defeat and ruin of that society ; but France is seen to possess elements entirely unaffected by the rottenness of the imperial court. The evil incubus is mortal, the nation immortal. Not only is the incubus mortal, but the fact that it is evil is the secret of its mortality. It is impossible for a Frenchman to despair of France, and this impossibility rests on one of those unreasoning sentiments at which men who are superior to emotion smile. But it makes France, and M. Zola's participation in it elevates his work as literature. This emotion has elements in its practical working of vainglory and unreality, but in its broader application it is an unselfish feeling based on those elemental qualities of human nature which make it necessary for men to be grouped in communities. It is therefore one of the universal principles which make human civilization and progress possible. Zola's sympathy with it gives this book earnestness, seriousness, and in many passages an elevation worthy of his theme.

The work of the poet Byron is marred by im-

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perfect understanding of humanity. Mr. Swinburne may criticise his verbal workmanship, but Byron will still remain a great artist, inclining, perhaps, a little too much to rhetorical force at the expense of poetico-musical form. His affluence must be held to compensate for his lack of finish. Byron's lack of philosophical insight and of sane judgment is balanced by great penetration and scope in some particular directions. His attitude towards nature is marked by sympathy with all that is lonely, self-contained, and vast. He shares this susceptibility with Wordsworth and Coleridge and Shelley. It was a new fashion to find in the ocean, the deserts, the mountains, something that appealed to the human mind; but Byron puts this sentiment in the most vigorous and emphatic verse. To see in the waste places, not something hostile to man, but a part of the great whole, to feel at home with the universal mother in her retirement, is the poet's privilege. He sees with joy the majestic form behind the repellent disguise. In this emotional excitement Byron is dominated by one of the great sentiments of humanity which was called into consciousness by the poets of the first quarter of this century. But in his attitude towards humanity Byron lacked the universal element. Allowance must be made for a certain petulance of disposition, which sometimes impelled him to say what he did not really mean, and to the irri-

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tating nature of his social surroundings, which he had not the native independence to disregard entirely, as Shelley did. But there was a central core of selfishness in Byron which rendered it impossible for him ever to hold just, broad, and noble views of his fellow-men. A great many real things seemed to him illusions. Some illusions seemed very real. His conception of woman is very low. In his view maternal love is not elevated above the animal stage from which it had developed. A woman fights for her child as a panther might for her cub. Defiance and rebellion are the highest virtues of man. The social order he regards from the stand-point of an anarchist, yet he had not the sincerity of conviction that would compel him to disdain the social considerations his adventitious position gave him. He has a feeling of reverence for the great men and the great historical monuments of the past, but failed to appreciate the organic connection between the past and present. At the same time he feels the true poet's indignation against injustice. He sacrificed his life and fortune in the struggle for the independence of Greece. His motto was *noblesse oblige*, but it was the artificial *noblesse* of caste, not the real *noblesse* of humanity, that he tried to live up to. Thus did an imperfect philosophy of life rob Byron's poetry of lasting dignity and essential worth. It remains glittering fragments, not a solid body compacted

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by just and noble thought. It is a presentation neither of the world as it is nor of the world as it ought to be, but of the world as it seemed to a man of limited insight and rooted prejudices.

Wordsworth's philosophy, though more Catholic than Byron's, presents some elements of narrowness. It is more than provincial, but it remains insular. His relation to nature is conceived in the mood of spiritual tenderness. The trees, the streams, the hills, are full of a beneficent life. The storm has its voice and the wind its message. The quieter aspects of nature: the daffodils that

"Stretched in never-ending line,  
Along the margin of a bay,  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance;"

the "slender blades of grass"; the "coy primrose, lovely flower," all excite his "delighted spirit," with a sympathy like that which Chaucer felt when he knelt down to look at the first daisy of the spring. It is a childlike quality to sympathize with these simple, unobtrusive examples of beauty, but the poet is a child, a favorite child of nature, he approaches her in a mood of absolute sincerity as a child does his mother, not analyzing and seeking to comprehend, but yielding to the bond of long intimacy and vague recollections of the days when earth nourished mankind in its infancy. Wordsworth's feeling for nat-

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ure was of this quality, and has, therefore, the universal element, part of the heredity of humanity.

His relation to man has something of the same breadth, though obscured occasionally by insular prejudice and innocent egotism. It is something that he insisted that people low in intellectual culture were interesting and companionable. This is not a new principle, for Chaucer and Shakespeare both knew that nobility of bearing or dignity of social rank were not in the least necessary to make men good subjects for the literary art. Wordsworth was, of course, wrong in assuming that the diction of the uneducated was *per se* a poetic medium, and did not need the same care in selection and arrangement that the diction of every class does before it can be worked into a literary structure. But he recognized the universal brotherhood of man, the real and rugged nature of the qualities that the struggle for existence close to the ground develops. The naturalness and homely vigor of the folk-dialect led him to over-estimate its literary capabilities. This is at least an error in the direction of truth and sincerity, and must be held to constitute an error in literary judgment, not proceeding from erroneous principle but from erroneous balancing of correct principles. Wordsworth is a poet through mastery of form and phrase, but his work has added dignity and worth from justness of sympathy and truth of principles.

It is very difficult to estimate the philosophical basis of the poet Shelley. In the first place, he is primarily a lyrical poet, one whose feelings are raised to fever heat or sunk in dejection by the character of any fragmentary portion of life that may for the moment arrest his attention. This feeling he puts in verse with the intensity of uncompromising youth. In the second place, we know too much about the conduct of his life, and from one or two instances where he acted impetuously and without a judicious balancing of motives we attribute to him a lack of sane judgment. In the light of this prejudice we interpret his verse. In the next place, he possessed a vigorous and preternaturally active intellect. This, combined with his intensity of feeling, led him to jump at conclusions about man and society with a youthful enthusiasm which further knowledge and experience might have led him to reverse. And again, there is something wonderfully attractive about him, as of a being from another sphere bewildered and indignant in this absurd world of ours. His personality warps our estimate. We ought to judge the body of Shelley's work without the slightest reference to the fact that he deserted his wife, for the artist's character does not influence his work, with the exception of those hidden qualities of his mind which led him to portray life with reference to certain principles. It is the longer works of the

poet as a rule that are affected by the philosophical bent of his mind, though the temper of his lyrics as a whole might throw some light on his theory of life. But to judge from either is, in Shelley's case, very difficult, because he is exceptional. In *Queen Mab* he exalts "necessity"—the rigid link between cause and effect—the blind, compelling action of law—as the moving force in history, "necessity, all supporting power, mother of the world." But this was written when he was eighteen, and even here he says, "The eternal world contains the evil and the cure," and declares that the distant millennium may see the melioration of man. In *Laon and Cythna* he makes plain his belief that the holy and unholy, though having apparently equal influence in the practical direction of affairs, are not to be ranked as equal forces in the moral order. The conflict between the serpent and the eagle is continuous. Good and evil are both eternal principles :

"Twin Genii—equal gods; when life and thought  
Sprang forth, they burst the womb of inessential  
naught."

But good is to prevail ; already—

"The victor Fiend,  
Omnipotent of yore, now quails, and fears  
His triumph dearly won, which soon will lend  
An impulse swift and sure to his approaching end."

It is characteristic of Shelley's disregard of the ordinary conventions that he personifies evil in the soaring eagle, and good in the creeping serpent.

It is impossible to read Shelley's prose, especially the prefaces to his poems, without forming a high opinion of his fairness and breadth of view. But when he criticises a man or his actions, his feelings get the better of him. He makes no allowances for hereditary prejudices, for the compound nature of man, for the slowness of historical development. He divides men into two camps—one warring with the eagle, the other with the serpent—forgetting that all individuals are on both sides and the battle-field is in the heart of every one as well as in society. His intellectual limitations are sources of literary weakness no less than of errors in conduct. But we can hardly wish him other than he was, for then we should have no Shelley.

In this discussion we cannot refer for illustration to philosophical writers like Emerson or Bacon. When thought is definitely philosophical and put in literary form it illustrates the counter-proposition that literary form adds immensely to the value of noble thought. Bacon is usually adduced as an example of the fact that the philosophical views which control the pen have not always equal supremacy in the conduct of life, that men make a definite, practical distinction in

their minds between the world as it is and the world as it ought to be, and this without any conscious self-deception. Nor can we draw much from artistic work of the quality of Hawthorne's. His world is too limited to illustrate the value of general principles. The baffling immanence of the spiritual and the symbolism of nature are fanciful ideas. His young girls are charming examples of purity, and yet of a negative character. The *Scarlet Letter* derives its excellence from its beauty as a romance. It is far removed from reality. The principles it illustrates are fidelity to duty and the inevitableness of moral retribution, the meagre and mechanical creed of the Puritan. A representation of life from such a stand-point must be of limited and temporary interpretation. Hawthorne's pictures are beautiful, his ideal of duty is righteous, and his insight into the heart is profound. Still, there are so many powerful though commonplace motives of human action in which he takes little interest that it can hardly be said that his writings illustrate a philosophy of life.

Longfellow is actuated by a simple set of maxims which would serve very well for the conduct of a sheltered life, but are an insufficient outfit for a poet who seeks to do more than to influence his contemporaries. Grace of form will not give verse life unless the thought is deeper than that of the established faith—unless, indeed, the grace

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be that rare beauty of lyric form which conquers oblivion. Whittier, perhaps less graceful than Longfellow, will influence men longer, for his content of thought is more weighty, and the emotions called out by a great struggle of principle pulsate in his verse. He was of a party that met opprobrium for their convictions, and in whom the convictions were deepened by the opprobrium they received. It turned out that they were right. Perhaps no one of them was actuated by such sincere devotion to abstract moral law as Whittier. By his pervading and profound conviction of the malign character of the injustice embodied in slavery, Whittier is lifted above the poets who sing for the gratification of the artistic sense of their contemporaries into the ranks of the poets whose thought elevates humanity. His world, as he sees it, is not a very bountiful nor beautiful one. There is a touch of the commonplace about it. But his world as it ought to be is profoundly moral—a world in which the law of love is as unchanging as the law of righteousness.

Rossetti is a poet whose work illustrates how essential breadth of view and philosophical comprehension of the world are to the highest literary worth. Here is an artist in words whose strictly artistic gifts have rarely been equalled. His ballads, notably the *Bride's Prelude* and *Rosemary*, show him master of a weird, haunting verbal

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music. His sonnets show a phrasal power of weight and noble simplicity. His imagination pictures things in the concrete. He sees the scenes in the magic globe as distinctly as the girl who gazed into its cloudy depths. His conception of love as a spiritual energy transfused through the earthly passion, and, giving it elevation and immortality, shows that he comprehended, instinctively, at least, one great principle. But what shall we say of a man who believes that the world of Dante's day is preferable to the world of to-day, who has apparently never heard of the discovery of the conservation of energy nor of the main outlines of evolution, and who thinks the form of a chair or the pattern of a brocade more important and interesting than the struggle of humanity towards higher things. His world, as it ought to be, is simply a beautiful world, beautiful in form and color and old association, but without the life of conflict. It is a picturesque rather than a beautiful world which is the ideal to which he refers for commentary on the world around him. How different are Tennyson and Browning in this regard. Tennyson writes of the

"Far-off, divine event,  
Towards which the whole creation moves."

The wind from the great battle blows through Browning's soul, and he calls to men with a

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heartly cheer and reports what obstacles the advance guard has met, with a hearty faith that the broken line will be reformed and some ground permanently won for the rank and file. The partial view taken by Rossetti seems unmanly and inadequate after we have been shown a broader, wider view of life. We see that the real meaning of the great drama has been overlooked by him, and lose respect and admiration for a guide who takes us into a corner behind the scenes to moralize over old costumes and rusty armor.

Even in *The Burden of Nineveh*, when the contrast between the ancient world and the modern is so thrust upon him that he cannot avoid referring to it, we find no hint of progress or development. In fact, Rossetti does not believe in modern civilization any more than an ultramontane ecclesiastic does. Of course he is right in not falling into the vulgar error of glorifying material and mechanical gains. Such progress is evident enough, and by itself is worthless enough. But surely civilization and Christianity mean something—perhaps not one hundredth part of what they should mean—and London is something more than a modern Nineveh. After a series of beautiful picturesque imaginings, such as only Rossetti could write, about the past from which the winged bull he has seen hoisted into the British Museum has come, he sums up with the

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reflection that, after all, the God of Nineveh might well be the God of London. Imagining some race of the future finding the image buried in the ruins of London, and thinking that the men who had lived there once worshipped it, he closes :

"The smile rose first—anon drew nigh  
The thought: those heavy wings spread high,  
So sure of flight, which do not fly;  
That set gaze, never on the sky;  
Those scripted flanks it cannot see;  
Its crown, a brow-contracting load;  
Its planted feet which trust the sod  
(So grew the image as I trod):  
O Nineveh, was this thy God—  
Thine (ours?) also, mighty Nineveh?"

We are charmed by Rossetti's verse, but the burden, the message, is of slight import. Formal beauty is not everything. The poet must have mental scope as well as poetic vision. He must be instinctively sound and right in many matters in which it is conventional to be wrong. He must have a rooted faith in the moral order. He must "believe in immortality if he himself would be immortal." Otherwise he belongs to the second class, no matter how perfect his execution.

It is not infrequently said that poetry should have no distinctly moral aim, that to be didactic is essentially inartistic, that art should appeal to

the feelings, especially to the higher emotions, but should not "express thoughts or principles." Doubtless this is very true if by "moral" is meant the practical ordering of conduct in harmony with a certain set of laws established by a certain set of people, and by "didactic" the teaching and repetition of these laws as if they were of universal validity ; for then, of course, moral and didactic are the same as sectarian and dogmatic. But moral has a higher sense than simply the religious. It covers the ethical, or that which the universal sense of mankind recognizes as the ground in which the fundamental distinction between right and wrong rests. In this sense morality must be part of the content of a great literary work, which apparently appeals only to the emotions. As Mr. Sheldon said, before the Ethical Society of St. Louis :

"It is not uncommon that an individual soul in a great emotional crisis, when giving utterance to his feelings, should, in a sudden outburst, let those emotions crystallize in some one great universal thought or principle. This would not be moralizing. It would only be a spasmodic illumination of the feelings, as the intellect in one wide grasp appreciates the true meaning and significance of the crisis. Great trial, sudden calamity, will now and then have the effect of making the individual suddenly look deep into philosophy. We not only feel deeply, but we think intensely in such emergencies. It is in this way we are to explain the occa-

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sional profound thoughts that are expressed by the characters of the dramas of Shakespeare and Goethe."

In periods of great excitement the primary intuitions of the intellect may come to the surface. The artist of insight appreciates this. This is illustrated by Sophocles in the *Antigone* when the heroine appeals to our intuition of the "unwritten laws that know no change." She says:

"It was not Zeus who gave them forth,  
Nor Justice dwelling with the Gods below,  
Who traced these laws for all the sons of men,  
Nor do I deem thy edicts strong enough  
That thou, a mortal man, should'st overpass  
The unwritten laws of God that know no change;  
They are not of to-day nor yesterday,  
But live forever, nor can man assign  
When first they sprang to being. Not through fear  
Of any man's resolve was I prepared  
Before the Gods to bear the penalty  
Of sinning against these."

We all—at least, all who have in any full sense experienced life—know how sorrow, mortal danger, imminent death, may widen the mortal horizon and throw all things into new and unexpected relations, so that we see a new world and a strange sky, and are conscious of the eternal, spiritual forces and appreciate the temporary and unsatisfactory character of the world which seemed so

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fair. We find an unexpected reserve of strength in ourselves. The eternal verities loom vaguely in the background, and we feel, in "a moment of utter sincerity," what reality is. It is the highest task of the poet to imagine and reproduce these experiences truthfully, and in doing so he is governed by a philosophy deeper than that of the schools.

Of course, we have artists who report solely from experience, who have not the audacity to portray the soul of man stripped of the trappings of conventionality. Very charming and instructive are the artists of this class—"photographers of the world as it seems to them." They, too, have their philosophy which colors their report. Thackeray and Dickens may be taken as types of this class. Thackeray satirizes shams, quackery, snobbishness, with relentless vigor. His ideal is the English gentleman of his period: brave, clean, well-dressed, slightly stupid, truth-telling—a unit in the great fabric of English society. An income of a certain amount is an absolute necessity. Non-conformity to a certain standard is treated as out of the question. When Philip Firmin and Clive Newcome are poor and married, their cases are regarded as absolutely helpless. Some money must be procured for them to avoid the tragedy of poverty. It is procured in one case by the cheap device of finding a lost will, and in the other by a second marriage. No doubt it is hard

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for a young man to descend in the social scale and work for a scanty living. Probably it is harder in England than it is here, but it is not impossible. Men have to do it. They do it every day. But that Clive should brace himself to meet such a horrible fate is impossible. He has not the manly heart to look destiny in the eye. He would fail. Habits, mode of life, associations are too strong for him. Thackeray feels that to lose social caste is a degradation no gentleman should be subjected to. He does not draw the character that can rise superior to such misfortune, apparently because he thinks that no character could be strong enough to triumph over it. He thinks the misfortune greater than it really is. His portrait is true to the types one ordinarily meets in society, but false to the normal man. If his realism was faithfully followed out he would show us the tragedy of the weak man overwhelmed by petty disaster, and not rescue him by some outside help. He likes Clive and Philip too much—they are very attractive fellows—to subject them fairly and squarely to the buffets of the world. In ethical conduct *Vanity Fair* rises above *The Newcomes*, for selfishness results in disaster, though here, too, it may be remarked that in real life so able a woman as Becky Sharp would never have failed as Becky Sharp did. Her real retribution would have been a brilliant and permanent worldly success coupled

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with the detestation of some one she really loved, or the satiety and weariness that comes to those who despise mankind because they know themselves too well and have attained their end.

In *Barry Lyndon* the workings of the ethical laws are more radically followed out. In that powerful sketch we have a character absolutely selfish in a body physically perfect. It is therefore invested with an enormous but unstable power. The harm it does, its absolute indifference to others, its failure when it comes into collision with the firm will of an upright and fearless man, its gradual sinking as bodily vigor lessens, the terror it inspires, not unmixed with fascination, in weaker wills, and its final defeat by the forces of society are true delineations of the interactions of good and evil. The writer felt the irresistible action of the moral laws, and he does not preach but lets things drift in the direction which his instinct told him they must inevitably follow. As the scene is laid in the eighteenth century, his imagination rather than his observation is at work, therefore he attains a higher truth than in his novels of contemporary life. As the hero has not a single redeeming quality except physical courage, the writer's sympathy does not lead him to warp the action from the natural and inevitable course.

Dickens's stories derive their interest from the persistent presentation of amusing personal pecu-

liarities, or rather eccentricities, of manner, appearance, and speech. The author's high spirits and enjoyment of the story carry us along in good-natured sympathy. His stories are really fairy stories, although his fairies wear the clothes and speak the dialect of every-day English people. The course of events is unnatural. Everything is theoretical, and all the characters are posing. The principles of ordinary conventional morality are inculcated: "be good and you will be rewarded"; "be bad, and you will be punished"—principles in operation no doubt in a well regulated English nursery, but by no means operative in the world in the sense the writer assumes. In the real Canterbury, Uriah Heep would become a successful man of business, and in the real London a wealthy banker like Ralph Nickleby would not hang himself on account of some trifling reverses, nor because he discovered that his son whom he thought dead was alive. We must give Dickens credit for appreciating the human nature of the poor, and giving us powerful fragmentary sketches of their trials and struggles, for the ability to arouse our feelings, even when we know the means are illegitimate, but we must say that his world is a make-believe world, and an air of insincerity characterized his manner of presenting it. In fact, he knows little of the real, serious world of aspiration and defeat. He was successful too early and too easily to compass

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the meaning of life. His work can never take a strong hold of future generations, and he lacked the philosophical insight which understands without experience and interprets by the imagination.

Dickens was an artist; this gave his work vogue. Dickens lacked some of the artistic powers; this renders his future uncertain. Whether the balance between his powers and his weaknesses is such as to relegate him to obscurity after the generation who remember him as the delight of their youthful days has passed away, no one would dare to decide. But if he does take his place among the temporary authors who have no message for future generations, we may be sure that his lack of a broad, sane view of human society is one of the reasons why he enters the great company of the unread. It is the appeal to universal human nature which is answered by posterity. Contemporaries award the laurel, but it soon withers unless renewed.

However, fundamental soundness of view is only one of the qualities of great literature. Perfection of form—the nameless charm of style—will alone insure immortality, as will a certain unanalyzable compound of artistic excellence. Hawthorne we know will live. Thackeray, we believe, will live, perhaps not so assured a life. It does seem as if Pickwick and Weller and Micawber were good risks for one hundred years;

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but we do not know. They have a good deal of vitality, and will certainly survive as long as we who knew them in their youth are on the stage. They would have more vigor had their creator lived in a broader, truer world ; had his conception of life been more philosophical and just ; had his love been less sentimental and his pathos less theatrical, his likes and dislikes more profound and impersonal. Most books float a short time, then become waterlogged, then sink with all their crew. The critics cannot scuttle them, though they sometimes try. They usually keep them afloat for a period by some air-blown bladders. If the specific gravity of a book is greater than that of the waters of oblivion, the wordy laudation of the entire guild will not prevent it from sinking before many years. So we must say to our old friends on board the good bark *David Copperfield*, and the trim little schooner *The Cricket on the Hearth*, which have floated so proudly out of the harbor, "Your voyage depends on yourselves and your craft. If you are booked to founder, we cannot save you, but we hope that in time you may anchor safely in Port Classic, moored alongside of that quaint Spanish galleon, *Don Quixote*, and the old-fashioned English brigs *Tom Jones* and *Tristram Shandy*. But your hull must be as sound and well-fashioned as theirs if you are ever to reach the port."

The theory of the realist is that art consists in

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representing with minute accuracy the world as it appears without any reference to the world as it ought to be. But whatever the method of the artist, realistic or romantic, his work lacks strength if he fails in a just appreciation of the relative worth of the forces which govern men as individuals and as members of society. No one has ever painted a minute section of the world as it seems more carefully and neatly than Henry James. He ignores many of the springs of human action entirely, or regards them as subordinate to the more complex ones that appear in the cultivated class of a highly civilized community. He confines his character group to people who may be supposed to be actuated by social ambitions of the more refined and delicate kind. Consequently they act as if there were not sufficient motive power to keep them going, or as if they were all doubtful whether their objects were really worth vigorous and sustained effort. It is true that we sometimes see exactly such people. We see cases where a train of events fails to develop and causes become abortive because the agents are profoundly indifferent or lack the energy which makes human wills operative. But this is not life—at least, not the life which art should represent—because some of the great elements of human nature are in abeyance. It is the negation of free personalities, and as much fragmentary and exceptional as the world of

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Zola's *Assommoir*, though very much more agreeable. It may be well to have it represented once, and then the artist should hasten to go on to something wider.

In the *American* we have the admirable portrait of the strong, clean, clear-headed young American, Newman, brought into contact with a group of the old French aristocracy. He falls in love with Madame de Cintr , a charming, refined, pure, young Frenchwoman of strong and thoroughly dignified nature. Although exactly opposite to him in the qualities that come from home association she comes to love him sincerely, and they are engaged to be married. Newman's strong character and positive ways, and supreme indifference to the social standards of the Haute-villes, becomes so distasteful to the heads of the family that they forbid the marriage. Madame de Cintr  acquiesces and retires to a convent. After some vain and futile efforts on the part of Newman to induce a change of their determination the story comes to a stand-still, leaving on the reader a confused impression of action arrested for insufficient causes.

It is hardly possible to see how the collision between regard for the artificial standard—a regard in this case so deeply rooted as to be almost a part of human nature itself—and one of the great natural forces, love, could be presented more vigorously and profoundly. But the book is based

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on a philosophical misconception. It undervalues human nature. For love between characters of the depth and truth of Newman and Madame de Cintr  is far stronger than all the motives which have their bases in the conventional prejudices ingrafted on character by early education or social and religious environment. That is the law, and to set it aside indicates an erroneous balancing in the author's mind of the various orders of motives. It is true that the social conventions do frequently conquer natural law. Women daily submit to be sacrificed, even sacrifice themselves, from such motives, but such women as Madame de Cintr  do not. To conquer the attraction between her and Newman by sentiments of filial obedience and family pride, is like assuming that a beautifully constructed and furnished house can keep out death. A writer with a profound insight into human nature would have felt instinctively that Madame de Cintr  must be presented as radically a shallow and easily influenced woman, like Ophelia. She does not make the impression of being weak. The character drawing is artistic, but the author has not entered fully into the nature of woman. This philosophical error makes his book, though graced with some of the rarest qualities of real literature, essentially incomplete and irritating. We cannot quite understand why something does not happen.

For these general reasons, and with these

limitations, the highest attribute of the poet is thought-power in the broad sense, that which coordinates multiform phenomena and refers them to law. It is this that has given to the poet the name seer or diviner of hidden things. Among the phenomena of this world none is of more import or of obscurer foundations than the societies into which men are aggregated. The greatest and most sacred of these is the nation. The highest function of the poet is to be a political thinker, not political reasoner on the jural organizations of the world, but one who discerns the emotional forces that give shape to the national organization and mould its history. Very many poets are attracted by the conceptions of earlier civilizations, especially mediæval forms over which time has cast a haze of romance and pathos. But they are greater and truer who are competent to interpret the civilization of their own day, because life as it is, is more than life as it was. This underlies much of Lowell's verse and gives his *Commemoration Ode* the dignity of a national document. It even imparts an element of greatness to the formless waste of words that lies on the pages of Whitman. The poet of the present day must be one in whose heart lies profoundly a conviction of the sacredness of democracy, even if he perceives also its limitations and its apparently unstable equilibrium. That any modern should do for modern civilization what Shake-

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speare did for English feudal civilization in the historical plays is not to be expected, for democracy is more difficult to understand than feudalism, but to dislike democracy radically will stifle and render nugatory the work of future poets, no matter how artistically delicate it may be. Worthy, serious work in literature grows out of sympathy with humanity and a perception of the broad relations of society, and is paralyzed by distrust of the present and deification of the past.

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## CHAPTER V

### THE MUSICAL POWER

IF we should hear a man reading poetry in a foreign tongue, of which we were ignorant, we should know at once that he was uttering verse. If he read in the ordinary manner, we should perceive that the succession of sounds was divided into groups of about equal length, or, at least, bearing a definite relation to each other in the time required for delivery—that is, that it was measured into lines. If he read with more reference to the meaning, this characteristic of isochronism would be modified and minimized; but something more complicated and pleasing to the ear would be perceived, a rhythm overlying the mechanical metre, a rise and fall in cadence, and the sounds of the words and syllables would be subject to a double grouping, not only into equal time-units but into a set of unequal parts, which were related to each other in succession by variations in energy, by a contrast, not by similarity, as the lines are. This would be about all that we should be likely to perceive—metre and rhythm.

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While this is sufficient to assure us of what we knew before—that verse is characterized by sound, by simple musical elements—we may notice further that these musical elements have *per se* very little value. It would give us very little pleasure to hear poetry of a fine order read in a language we did not comprehend. It would be nothing but tiresome to listen to the best Italian reader of Dante if we did not understand a word he said. To singing in an unknown tongue we can listen without impatience, but not to reading. We must therefore admit that the musical element in verse is entirely a subordinate one, of great power in combination, of none whatever by itself. That the musical element is one of great power in combination with the meaning of the verse is evident from the fact that all people like to hear verse they can understand well read. Nor is the musical element of verse a subjective one due to the skill of the reciter. It belongs to the verse, so that we hear it in imagination when we read to ourselves. The reader does not create it; he discloses it. The power of the musical form, rudimentary as it is as music in that combination of words we call poetry, is evident, not only from the fact that it gives pleasure, but also from the fact that it adds so much to the force of the words. It makes them mean a great deal more than they do as words. If the tale of the Ancient Mariner were related in prose it would

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lose nearly all its power, and what it retained would be radically different in character and effect. To translate a short lyric into prose is evidently impossible. The music gone, the words are dead. It is not easy to translate prose, because an abstract word of one language is rarely accurately represented in meaning by a word in another language; but it is impossible to translate poetry, because it is impossible that a word of poetic diction in any language be represented by a different sound. At most, a new poem founded on the other can be constructed.

The accent is the most evident quality of English speech, although it may not be easy to explain exactly what it is physically. In verse almost any one can detect a misplaced accent. It is felt to spoil the line. Some syllable in a word is habitually pronounced with a little more energy than any of the others. Probably the vowel sound is slightly prolonged, as well as strengthened, and usually the consonant sounds next to it are joined to it, so as to give the accented syllable increased volume. By arranging these accents at regulated intervals we obtain a substructure on which to base the acoustic edifice we call verse, for accent is not the only verse element, although so important a one. The syllables possess also tone; the vowel sound is a note, and, with its consonant, possesses musical quality. It is the arrangement of these in groups

and sequences that gives the verse life. As far as the accents are concerned, we might compare a line of verse to a rank of soldiers, all bearing muskets at the same angle on their left shoulders ; but verse which possesses no higher quality than this mechanical regularity would be of very little poetic worth. The rhythmical scheme, overlying the regular accentual or metrical scheme, depends principally on the succession of tones and on the management of pauses. It is this which interprets emotion and is the true poetic structure. In blank-verse the metrical scheme is partly lost sight of in delivery. It is subordinated, though not entirely submerged. Rhythm adds to some of the equally spaced accents the force of emphasis, the rhetorical accent connected with the thought, and superinduces a long wave on the equal beats. It varies continually, while the regular accent-beat is always the same. When the rhythmical scheme is uniform and coincides with the metrical scheme, we have the tiresome manner of Pope ; but if the metrical scheme is disregarded entirely, we lose all poetical structure. We have no foundation on which to base rhythm. The result is not verse, but rhythmical prose, in which we discern here and there the fragment of a line.

The building of this complicated structure is poetic art. The part of it which is metrical can be investigated, and within certain limits made

the basis of a science called prosody, rightly called a science because it is subject to uniformity and deals with comparatively exact things—accents. The part of it which is rhythmical can be commented on and its beauty felt, but as it rests on modifications of sound which have no definite connection with thought, it cannot be reduced to laws, and its varieties are too great to be subjected to classification. In it each poet is a law to himself and does his work instinctively, and gives out a part of himself. The man who can superinduce rhythm on metre is a poet; the men who can build only metrical structures are versifiers. Shakespeare's *Tempest* is a beautiful example of metre overlaid with rhythm. Much of Wordsworth's blank-verse is simply metrical.

What is usually called prosody may be carried out to great refinement of classification, and remain a barren and fruitless study, unless we remember that it refers to the framework of verse merely. Beating time is effected by the simplest part of the mechanics of verse; indeed, by the part which partakes so largely of the nature of material mechanics as to fall by itself below the dignity of a "fine art." Those who use it practically in writing verse know very little about it scientifically, and do no more than apply the elementary principles instinctively. Shakespeare and Burns were unacquainted with its technical terms; nor is it understood with anything like

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the scientific precision that music is. It is safe to give but the merest outline of this foundation of the music of poetry.

The line or group of words is composed of accented and unaccented syllables. If the accented syllables occupy the even-numbered places, and are more closely connected with the unaccented syllables before them than with those after them, these groups of the two syllables—one accented and one unaccented—are called iambic feet; if the contrary is the case, they are called trochaic feet.

"I judge | by this | quies | cence I | am old"

is an iambic line.

"Ever | deeper, | deeper, | deeper"

is a trochaic line. In reading aloud, the divisions into feet are not brought out, though they are unconsciously felt. The accents are marked rather less forcibly but more uniformly than they are in reading prose. If we mark the divisions—the feet—by slight pauses, we are said to scan the line.

In order to bring out the structure, the termination of a line should always be marked by a slight pause, shorter than that which marks the ends of clauses and sentences. If this pause is made too long, the metrical structure is made

unpleasantly evident ; if it is omitted entirely, which may be done when the grammatical pause does not coincide with the end of the line, the composition becomes little more than rhythmical prose. A single accented syllable sometimes takes the place of a foot, most frequently at the end of the line, the pause taking up the time which would normally be occupied by the utterance of the unaccented syllable.

The standard line-group in English poetry consists of five iambic feet, the rhymed and the unrhymed pentameter, the heroic couplet, and English blank-verse. The next most common line is the four-accent iambic line used in *In Memoriam*. Lines of two or three accents are less frequently used, and belong usually to lyric verse—that is, verse in which the singing quality is more marked than the descriptive, narrative, or pictorial quality. Lines of six accents are not so frequently written, and lines of seven or eight accents invariably tend to break into two shorter ones, as may readily be seen in reading the eight-accent lines of *Locksley Hall*.

The end of the line is marked by a strong accent, which gives notice of the completion of one of the symmetrical word-groups. The very essence of verse is a symmetrical acoustic substructure, overlaid with varying ornamental sound-sequences. In order to mark the end of the lines more emphatically a decorative device

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was invented early in the Middle Ages, which has become almost universal in English poetry, and has probably been more productive of pleasure to the human race than any other invention, except that of musical instruments. It is called rhyme, and applies to the accented syllable which marks the end of the line, and consists in identity of vowel sound and subsequent consonant sound with difference of preceding consonant sound. Thus *room* and *boom*, or *June* and *tune*, rhyme perfectly; *June* and *moon*, rhyme imperfectly. If the line has a trochaic ending, the accented syllables rhyme, and the terminal unaccented syllables are identical, like *lover* and *plover*. This is known as a feminine rhyme.

The function of the rhyme is threefold: first, it individualizes the line by bringing its termination prominently into notice. It gives the pleasure the human mind takes in correspondence or echoes of sound. It links the lines in groups—couplets or triplets or quatrains with similar sound-terminations—thereby creating the next higher group, or stanza, which without rhyme could only be constructed of lines that were marked by similar accent positions or similar lengths.

The stanza should not exceed eight or nine lines: eight as in the *ottava rima* or the octave of the sonnet, and nine as in the Spenserian

stanza, because the mind does not readily comprehend acoustic units of greater length as wholes, but the possible combinations of lines of different lengths marked by either a feminine or a masculine rhyme, or by different positions in the stanza, is very great indeed. Taking eight lines as the limit of the stanza, four as the limit of corresponding rhymes, two—masculine and feminine—as the kinds of rhyme, and the length of lines as running from three to six feet, we could have an enormous number—many millions—as the possible stanzaic combinations in which either the trochaic or iambic foot was used indifferently. The number is greatly increased by the facts that a single long syllable may be used as a terminal, and that there is another important kind of foot consisting of three syllables. This comprises the dactyl, in which the accented syllable is followed by two unaccented; the amphibrach, in which the accented syllable is between the two unaccented ones; and the anapest, in which the accented syllable is preceded by two unaccented ones. The possible number of different stanzaic forms is therefore practically infinite. But few have been found which have distinct character, though, no doubt, many beautiful stanzaic forms remain undiscovered.

With regard to the musical qualities of the line based on the iambic, trochaic, or dactylic beat,

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the iambic foot is rather the best suited to the English language, although the musical energy of a line depends more upon the rhythm than the metre, and therefore less upon the foot than upon the rhyme and other elements. The iambus is the more natural because less violence is done to ordinary pronunciation when a foot is made up of a word or of two syllables that belong together grammatically than when the natural union is broken, and because very many such combinations are regularly pronounced as iambi. Monosyllabic nouns are strongly accented in ordinary utterance, otherwise they would be submerged. They are usually preceded by a particle or an article which belongs with them, thus forming another large class of iambi. Monosyllabic verbs are strong, but they are frequently preceded by the sign of the infinitive, or by one of the pronouns which we can accent or not at pleasure. These combinations are for all pronunciation usages one word. For these reasons natural iambi are so common in English speech that we frequently find fragments of iambic lines in prose, and more than two-thirds of our poetry, and that the portion which is least artificial, is built from the iambic foot, and the iambic pentameter, rhymed or unrhymed, is the most used line. Iambic verse will be found on examination to be written with fewer inversions and to be nearer to the natural movement of the English language, than

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that which is written in trochees or dactyls, because the use of iambic compels fewer harsh and unnatural syllable-combinations. It will also be found that the syllables of a word cut by the cæsura fit more easily into the iambic mould.

But it must be admitted that there is a marked tendency in English to place the accent on the first syllable of dissyllabic nouns, like *student*, *teacher*, *father*, and nearly all proper names. The comparative and superlative forms of monosyllabic adjectives, like *deeper*, *swifter*, and the participles of monosyllabic verbs, like *going*, *loving*, furnish natural trochaic combinations. So are all the adverbs, like *softly*, *slowly*. Nevertheless, these are not numerous enough to prevent trochaic verse from having a slightly foreign sound. It is a little further removed from prose movement than iambic verse is. By reason of this very strangeness trochaic verse is sometimes very attractive poetically. Again, the feminine rhyme, one of the most beautiful verse-elements, compels the use of a trochee, as does the termination of a line in a single accented syllable.

Longfellow's *Psalm of Life* is trochaic :

"Tell me | not, in | mournful | numbers, |  
 'Life is | but an | empty dream!'  
 For the | soul is | dead that | slumbers,  
 And things | are not | what they | seem."

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So, also, is the poem *Hiawatha* :

" Ever | deeper, | deeper, | deeper |  
Fell the | snow ; o'er | all the | landscape  
Fell the | covering | snow, and | drifted  
Through the | forest | round the | village.

" All the | earth was | sick and | famished,  
Hungry | was the | sky a | bove them,  
And the | hungry | stars a | bove them,  
Like the | eyes of | wolves glared | at them."

It seems quite evident that both of these examples—especially the last—have a movement more foreign in sound than English iambic poetry generally has. In fact, in reading from *Hiawatha* we are very apt to carry the last syllable of the line over to the next one, and so change the poem from a trochaic to an iambic one, so dominant is our tendency to the iambic movement. Comparing one of Longfellow's iambic poems we see that it sounds slightly more like the ordinary English speech. Longfellow is taken as an example because he is a poet whose art is typical. The following quotation from Keats's *Robin Hood* shows how beautiful trochaic measures are sometimes from the very fact that they are slightly unnatural :

" No ! those days are gone away  
And their hours are old and gray,  
And their minutes buried all  
Under the down-trodden pall

Of the leaves of many years!  
Many times have winter's shears  
Frozen North and chilling East,  
Sounded tempests to the feast  
Of the forest's whispering fleeces,  
Since men knew nor rent nor leases.

"No, the bugle sounds no more,  
And the twanging bow no more;  
Silent is the ivory shrill,  
Past the heath and up the hill;  
There is no mid-forest laugh  
When lone Echo gives the half  
To some wight amazed to hear  
Jesting, deep in forest drear."

In the same metre are his *Lines on the Mermaid Tavern*, which begin :

"Souls of poets dead and gone,  
What Elysium have ye known,  
Happy field or mossy cavern,  
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?"

The lovely lyrical movement of those simple trochaic lines must be evident to the least responsive ear, and the epithet "unnatural" means simply that it is more foreign to the normal prose movement of English than octosyllabic iambics would be. The same musical quality of trochaic verse is evident in what is one of the most beau-

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tiful sound-combinations in the language, Shakespeare's song :

"Take, O take those lips away  
That so sweetly were forsworn !  
And those eyes, the break of day,  
Lights that do mislead the morn !  
But my kisses bring again,  
Bring again,  
Seals of love, but sealed in vain !  
Sealed in vain !"

The Trinity Hymn and the magnificent *Rock of Ages Cleft for Me* are further examples of the same quality, as is the lyric of Prosser Frye's, beginning :

"Softly strike upon the strings  
Till the answering music rings  
Like the ripple of a stream  
Running low athwart a dream."

An iambic scansion might be forced upon the above by calling the first foot a long syllable, but such a division would evidently do violence to the musical quality.

In saying that trochaic verse has a peculiar haunting music of its own it is not intended to convey the idea that iambic verse is not also musical. Tennyson's lyrics, notably the *Bugle Song*, and Newman's *Lead, Kindly Light*—the most beautiful hymn of the century—would

prove that on the iambic base may be built structures of perfect melody. Still, the charm of the trochee seems slightly more delicate, evanescent, and subtle than the charm of the iambic. The trochee runs or trips; the iambic marches, and a dignified march is more germane to English than a dance.

Of course poems are not necessarily written in either trochee or iambic to the exclusion of the other. On many syllable combinations the accent is not so decided that they cannot be used indifferently as trochees or iambi. The personal pronouns that come in so frequently can be treated as accented or non-accented, according to the exigencies of the verse. The principle is that in the English language groups of iambic are slightly more natural than combinations of trochees. The old ballad measure is iambic, and the preference for iambic feet led to the use of the inverted forms—"a lady gay," "a maiden fair," and the like.

The combinations of iambic and trochaic lines in the poem can be successfully attempted only by poets of the most delicate musical ear. In their hands the union of the two sometimes results in structures of surprising harmony and variety. Milton's *Il Penseroso* and *L'Allegro* are examples of this. The succession of iambic four-accent lines is continually interrupted by trochaic lines, or by lines beginning with an unaccented

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syllable. Trochees may even be found in the iambic lines without giving in the least the effect of a misplaced accent. Some passages are largely trochaic.

“Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee  
Jest, and youthful Jollity,  
Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,  
Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,  
Such as hang on Hebe’s cheek,  
And love to live in dimple sleek;  
Sport, that wrinkled Care derides,  
And Laughter holding both his sides.  
Come, and trip it as you go,  
On the light fantastic toe,  
And in thy right hand lead with thee,  
The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty.”

The last four lines illustrate the change of movement which characterizes the entire poem.

Feet of three syllables, one accented and two unaccented, are not uncommon combinations in English. Such words as *sensitive*, *radiant*, *tenderly*, *balcony* are natural dactyls. Dactyls are invariably used in combination with shorter feet, but the metres into which they enter are termed dactylic. Their presence gives liveliness to humorous verse and power to serious verse. Hood’s *Bridge of Sighs*—

“One more un | fortunate,  
Weary of | breath,  
Rashly im | portunate,  
Gone to her | death”—

is dactylic, and Browning's *Lost Leader*—

“Just for a | handful of | silver he | left us,  
Just for a | ribbon to | stick in his | coat”—

is another example. The English hexameter which ends with a trochee is apt to contain too many dactyls, as in Longfellow's *Evangeline* and Kingsley's *Andromeda*.

“This is the | forest pri | meval, the | murmuring | pines  
and the | hemlocks,  
Bearded with | moss and in | garments | green, in-  
dis | tinct in the | twilight,  
Stand like | druids of | eld with | voices | sad and  
pro | phetic.”

These three lines contain eleven dactyls to seven trochees.

The peculiar qualities of this foot are, however, seen better in shorter lines, as in Longfellow's *Skeleton in Armor* and Drayton's *Agincourt*, and numberless semi-humorous verses, which invariably possess the quality of vigor. It was not much used during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, except here and there in a ballad. Goldsmith uses it and the anapest with good effect in some of his lighter verse. During the present century some of our poets have used it, as Shelley in *The Sensitive Plant*. Mr. Swinburne, whose skill in verbal acrobatics has added many ingenious metres, has shown the capacity

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of this foot and its companion the anapest in many new combinations. It is not the same thing as the Greek dactyl any more than the English hexameter is the same as the Greek hexameter, because Greek is a differently constituted language from English, but it is analogous to it, and it adds greatly to the musical resources of English verse.

The metrical structure of regularly recurring accents, even when the lines are clearly defined by rhyme, would have little life or vigor were it not ornamented by tone-combinations. Sequences of similar consonant sounds, called alliterations, and sequences of similar vowel sounds, called assonances, as well as contrast of sounds, give body to the verse. These combinations are so numerous and subtle as to defy discovery, and although we become aware of a certain quality that distinguishes the music of Longfellow, Rossetti, or Tennyson, we can never be sure that we have found in any case the characteristic element. An attempt to imitate them shows at once that only the grosser part can be comprehended. And it is the fine part that really constitutes their poetry. Almost any one by taking pains can write verse in which, by a little forcing and slurring—which must be done in almost all verse—the accents will fall with regularity and the rhymes be correct. Few can produce more than one or two musical lines, and few can make their

verse rhythmical. The more complicated harmonies are out of the reach of all but the exceptional individuals to whom they are the natural means of expression. Verse is a very complicated structure; feet, lines, stanzas, rhymes, assonances, phrases, clauses, and sentences, compounded into a whole which is more than the sum of its parts. At the bottom lies the metrical structure of equal time-beats divided into line groups. Over this is thrown the loosely fitting and varying rhythm regulating the monotonous succession of sounds by a higher and inscrutable law.

Verse may be metrically correct, but unless it has some rhythmical rise and fall it will be valueless as emotional expression. The even beats of a pendulum do not touch the heart. The monotonous stroke of a bell is irritating if prolonged. Equidistant sounds are meaningless and tedious, even though each one be resonant and beautiful; but when successive sounds are slightly differentiated, so that they can be grouped, and there is a movement of succession among them, so that they increase in volume or quality and then diminish, each related to the preceding one in varying proportions, not lawlessly, but regulated by a law we cannot formulate, then the succession of sounds assumes meaning, has life and significance, recalls forgotten moods, and is in some measure part of the universal harmony of nature. If the measured strokes of a bell are brought to us from

a distance, the air, which, even on the stillest day, is full of movements and currents and pulsations such as mould the clouds, causes the sounds sometimes to increase and then to linger and die away. The mechanical metre of man is overlaid by one of the rhythmic schemes of nature, of which we are a part, and we are conscious of some quality of the sound that is beautiful and suggestive.

The energy of nature tends to rhythmical expression. The sounds of nature are almost invariably rhythmical, because, as said before, the air which conveys them is never entirely at rest. Even the monotonous sound of Niagara impresses itself upon the listener at a slight distance as something alive. There is a beat or pulsation running through it, or else it is echoed from a cloud, or it passes through strata of air of different densities, so as to cause it to rise and fall, according to physical law. When the wind is blowing the character of the sound is entirely changed. The intensity and pitch vary continually, and give rise to a rhythm which, though not metrical, is governed by some law. The rhythm of waves breaking on an irregular coast-line is evident. It approaches nearer to a measured beat, but it has its own cadences, for no two waves are precisely similar and no two successive waves are entirely independent. The life of human beings is dependent on two metrical movements, the breathing and the beating of the heart. These

are accelerated or retarded by the intensity of life, by emotion. So closely are the physical and mental connected that every phase of feeling finds its best expression in rhythmical movement. In cases of elevated feeling, whether of sorrow, indignation, or exultation, this tendency to rhythmical movement is so forcibly impressed on words that it attaches itself to the words when they are transferred from one language to another. It belongs to the idea. Such a rhythm is sometimes called a "sense-rhythm," and is proper to prose. The rhythms which express the more delicate and artificial emotions cannot be translated. They belong to the poet as an individual and to his personal manner of expressing himself. The sense-rhythm is universal. It belongs to humanity. Thus the writer of the Hebrew Psalms was inspired, not by the scenery of Palestine nor by adoration of some local god who presided over its barren hills, but by the conception of the great, universal, spiritual power, whose "is the earth and the fulness thereof." Therefore, his words, when translated, carry the majestic rhythm with them. Mr. Theodore Watts quotes from the book of Hindu law in support of this view of the connection between idea and form:

"Single is each man born into the world; single he dies; single he receives the reward of his good deeds, and single the punishment of his evil deeds. When he dies his body lies like a fallen tree upon the earth, but

his virtue accompanies his soul. Wherefore let man harvest and garner virtue, so that he may have an inseparable companion in traversing that gloom which is so hard to be traversed."

It is evident that the seriousness of the thought of man's personality, of the individuality of the soul, so impressed the original writer that his words fell into a solemn cadence. And as this thought has a universal application to the race of man and not merely to some one man, it falls naturally into a rhythmical form when translated into English. This fact, that the words of exalted thought and universal application naturally fall into a rhythmical form, is exemplified by the address of the Northumbrian chief reported by Bede, by Walter Raleigh's apostrophe to death, by Lincoln's Gettysburg address, by prayers to God conceived in a serious and elevated spirit, as many of the collects, by the narrative of the crucifixion, by much of the Book of Job—in a word, by all expression where the writer is conscious of the dignity of his theme.

As an example of a metric scheme overlaid with a rhythmical scheme, yet still retaining definite symmetry, let us take one of Shakespeare's sonnets:

"Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove;

Oh no, it is an ever-fixed mark,  
 That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
 It is the star to every wandering bark  
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be  
 taken.

Love's not time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks .  
 Within his bending sickle's compass come:  
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
 If this be error and upon me proved,  
 I never writ nor no man ever loved."

In the first line the metric scheme is almost entirely obscured. No one would think of reading it as it scans :

"Let me | not to | the mar | riage of | true minds, | "

nor the first part of the second line, "Admit impeded | iments." The phrase is too strong and abrupt. There is a marked rhythm in it rising quickly to "not," then again a wave ending in "minds," and a tumultuous level in "Admit impediments," expressing an energy of resolution which is kept up in the next clause, "Love is not love." Thus far we have no hint of the line or indeed of any measure, but the next line—

"Which al | ters when | it al | tera | tion finds"—

is not only a grammatical unit but the metrical structure comes to the surface, the rhythm, three



waves with their summits on the accented syllables of the first, third, and fifth feet, now fits the line whose termination is clearly marked by the strong rhyme between "finds" and "minds." This coincidence between grammatical structure and line, rhythmic wave and metric accent, is kept up in the next line,

"Or bends with the remover to remove,"

which is also a grammatical unit with precisely the same rhythm as the former, but as the line structure has been already clearly defined terminates with a less perfect rhyme.

The next ten lines are by their grammatical structure divided into five groups of two each. In these the rhythmic scheme also groups two lines in pairs, and the metric scheme is subordinated. The first and second pairs have the same movement of two waves in each line:

"Oh no, it is an ever-fixed mark,  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be  
taken."

The similarity of the rhythm in these can hardly escape notice, although the summit of the first wave in the first comes on the second syllable and in the third on the fourth. In each pair are two waves. In the next pair the metrical scheme

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is more marked and the rhythm less accentual, and, especially in the second, is reinforced by a beautiful series of assonances and alliterations.

“Within his bending sickle’s compass come”

is a very beautiful line. We hear the metrical stroke very plainly. The “s’s” in “sickle” and “compass” echo those in “rosy lips and cheeks” in the line above. This line has but one rhythmical wave similar to the wave in the tenth line—

“But bears it out even to the edge of doom.”

Finally, the sonnet ends with a couplet, each line of which has the same metrical movement, a single wave, with the summit in the middle of the line and the lowest point at the end.

We can say this of this sonnet: that the metrical structure, though perfect and uniform throughout, is much more evident in some lines than in others; that the rhythmical scheme is varied and overlies the metric scheme, at first concealing it entirely; that the rhythm depends on the relative strength of the successive metrical accents, on the logical emphasis, and on the tone-color or succession of similar sounds, and is largely influenced by the increased accentual emphasis on the rhyming syllables. We can say, further, that the rhythm of the lines, though varied, is still obedient to a certain norm; that

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the rhythm is recurrent in certain lines with very pleasant effect, though if a similar rhythm recurred in every line we should have had a monotonous, singsong effect, and that the stanzaic structure influences the rhythm, if it does not entirely determine it. In such a line as

“But bears it out even to the edge of doom,”

the rhythm, with the defiant emphasis on “out” and the solemn fall on the syllables “even to the edge of doom,” is correspondent to the sentiment, and the entire structure expresses as much through its rhythmical movement as it does by the direct significance of the words.

It might be said that all this is purely subjective, that it is what an individual reader sees in poetry or imagines he sees. That is true. But I think that it will be found that all poetry that has stood the test of time has the rhythmical quality in addition to qualities of content, meaning, etc. ; that the rhythm is the most important part of the form, and that all persons who are fond of poetry give it when reading a marked rhythmical movement, in some cases even suppressing the rhymes, and in blank-verse making the line structure entirely subordinate to the rhythmical wave.

As an example of dactylic verse, Shelley's *Sensitive Plant* may be taken. It is full of beautiful

rhythms, which could hardly have been superinduced on an iambic structure. As a rule, the rhythmical units coincide with the lines. It is written in quatrains rhyming in couplets. The normal line is three dactyls and an accented syllable. As this long syllable is the rhyming syllable, it can readily fill the time of the other feet. But instead of dactyls we frequently find two and even four syllables, and the accent is as frequently on the second or even on the third syllable of the foot as on the first. The lines, therefore, vary in length from nine to eleven syllables, and the places of the first three accents are not fixed with absolute definiteness in the line. These variations give very different rhythms to different passages, but the poem is a very musical combination of rhythms. Without these variations the decided beat that is made by the final syllable would become very monotonous. These variations are far from lawless, for they are made by a poet. But the law is inscrutable. To use Mr. Watts's figure, "it is inscrutable as the law which blends the songs of all the birds in the thicket into a chorus." As the songs are contemporary, they make a harmony; as the rhymes are consecutive, they make a melody. But in either case the correspondence can only be felt; it cannot be analyzed. There is, too, a very subtle correspondence between the music of this poem and the mystical, haunting, spiritual suggestions that

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the theme brings to the surface ; but that is altogether too elusive a quality to submit to any interpretation. The poem begins :

" A sensitive plant in a garden grew,  
And the young winds fed it with silver dew ;  
And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light,  
And closed them beneath the kisses of night.

" And the spring arose on the garden fair,  
Like the spirit of love, felt everywhere,  
And each flower and herb on earth's dark breast  
Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.

" But none ever trembled and panted with bliss  
In the garden, the field, or the wilderness,  
Like a doe in the noontide with love's sweet want  
As the companionless sensitive plant.

" The snow-drop and then the violet  
Arose from the ground with warm rain wet,  
And their breath was mixed with fresh odor sent  
From the turf, like the voice and the instrument."

This poem can be scanned in different ways ;  
thus, for instance, we may divide :

" A sensitive | plant in a | garden | grew,"

or

" A sen | sitive plant | in a gar | den | grew."

We may divide :

“And the spring | arose | on the gar | den fair,”

or

“And the spring | arose on the | garden | fair,”

and in either case agree with a scheme of prosody conceived *a priori*. But some lines will not admit of more than one method of division. For instance :

“Told whilst the | morn kissed the | sleep from her |  
eyes”

—three consecutive dactyls and a long syllable. Others, again, will divide only into anapests ending with an iambus, like

“From the turf, | like the voice | and the in | strument.”

Still, the number of dactyls preponderates over the number of anapests, and we may fairly call this a dactylic poem. In very many cases the dactyl is preceded by an unaccented syllable with no weight like the “a” in “A sensitive,” so that in many lines two extra syllables are found. Again, some lines are short two syllables, like

“The plumed | insects | swift and | free.”

Now, when in a poem confessedly musical in form the number of syllables in a line varies from

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eight to twelve, but four accents invariably are found, we must conclude that the position and number of the accent is a far more important consideration than the number of syllables. The poem is written by ear, not by counting on the fingers. It obeys a melodic not a prosodical law. As Shelley himself says, "I have simply clothed my thoughts in what appeared to me the most obvious and appropriate language. A person familiar with nature and with the most celebrated productions of the human mind can scarcely err in following his instinct with respect to selection of language produced by that familiarity." Shelley's modesty prevented him from qualifying his statement by saying, "An exceptional person like me, gifted with the ear for the poetic rhythms of language," instead of, simply, "a person." It is not enough that "poetry and external nature should be a passion and an engagement." There must be the creative power to construct a visible habitation for the imprisoned angel, or it remains in the soul.

To return to the *Sensitive Plant*. The primary measure being three beats followed by a heavy stroke at the end of the line, the variations on this movement by the secondary rhythm or wave are numberless. Sometimes the line is shortened and the beats equidistant. Sometimes the line is prolonged, some of the accent-beats are brought a little nearer each other or moved a little further

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apart. But in such cases the power of the beats is altered so as to bring in a crescendo or a diminuendo in the succession, and we have wave after wave in endless variation, all urged by the same wind or poetic afflatus yet each individualized in form and color.

The rhythmical groups are individualized by pauses—that is, the rhythmical units are grammatical units. The metrical units—the lines—are marked off by the heavy terminal accent, or by the rhyme. In the extract from the *Sensitive Plant* these coincide, and the art of Shelley is shown in impressing so many beautiful and varying rhythms upon a succession of verbal groups of about the same length. This is called the “end-stopt form,” and may be distinguished by the fact that the marks of punctuation fall at the end of the lines. In the Shakespearian sonnet there are three rhythmical units in the first four lines, the first one of a tremendous and masculine power, ending with the word “impediments.” When the rhythmical or logical units do not coincide with the metrical units the writer is said to use the “overflow form.” The danger in the end-stopt form is, since the rhythmical units are nearly the same length acoustically, that they assume a sameness of movement, which if sustained becomes irritating and commonplace. Of this Pope’s poetry, especially his translation of Homer, furnishes many examples. In the follow-

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ing quotation it will be noticed that the rhythmical units are either whole lines or couplets, and the monotonous effect is quite apparent. The entire construction suffers from excessive regularity, every line, with one exception, ending with a mark of punctuation :

“ At this Pelides, frowning stern, replied :  
O tyrant, armed with insolence and pride :  
Inglorious slave to interest, ever joined  
With fraud unworthy of a royal mind ;  
What generous Greek, obedient to thy word,  
Shall form an ambush and shall lift the sword ?  
What cause have I to war at thy decree ?  
The distant Trojans never injured me ;  
To Pythia's realms no hostile troops they led ;  
Safe in her vales my warlike coursers fed :  
Far hence removed, the hoarse-resounding main,  
And walls of rocks secure my native reign ;  
Whose fruitful soil luxuriant harvests grace,  
Rich in her fruits and in her martial race.”

This is metre and nothing else, and is as far removed from Shakespeare's method as is possible. The lines are clauses, and the couplets give the impression of having been manufactured separately.

The following quotation from Keats's *Sleep and Poetry* illustrates excess in the other direction of continual overflow :

“ Could all this be forgotten ? Yes, a schism  
Nurtured by foppery and barbarism,

Made great Apollo blush for this his land.  
Men were thought wise who could not understand  
His glories: with a puling infant's force  
They swayed about upon a rocking-horse  
And thought it Pegasus. Ah, dismal-souled!  
The winds of heaven blew, the ocean rolled  
Its gathering waves. Ye felt it not. The blue  
Based its eternal bosom, and the dew  
Of summer nights collected still to make  
The morning precious. Beauty was awake!  
Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead  
To things ye knew not of; were closely wed  
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule  
And compass vile."

Here the rhythmical units are very beautiful and varied, as is always the case with Keats; but they have so little connection with the metrical construction that they conceal it almost entirely, and the reader will fall into a loose iambic prose unless he is very careful to emphasize the rhymes slightly.

Milton's blank-verse is written in the overflow method; but Milton's ear was so delicate that he will not allow his metrical structure to be submerged. His inversions are so managed that the emphasis which is requisite to bring out the meaning seems also to bring out the metrical form. His rhythms have a peculiar dignity and great variety under uniformity of type.

Shakespeare at first wrote blank-verse in the

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end-stopt manner. Afterwards he overlaid his metre with rhythmical ornament. But in either method he was acoustically artistic, giving variety to the metrical rhythm of *Love's Labour's Lost*, and never allowing the beautiful, loose rhythm, even in the *Tempest*, to disguise the metrical character of his verse. The following extracts show the change in his manner, a change due partly to increased mastery and partly to the fact that all the dramatists adopted the overflow manner about the end of the sixteenth century :

*Princess :*

“A time methinks too short  
To make a world-without-end bargain in.  
No, no, my lord! your grace is perjured much,  
Full of dear guiltiness, and therefore this:  
If for my love (as there is no such cause)  
You will do aught, this shall you do for me:  
Your oath I will not trust, but go with speed  
To some forlorn and naked hermitage  
Remote from all the pleasures of the world;  
There stay until the twelve celestial signs  
Have brought about their annual reckoning.”

*Love's Labour's Lost.*

*Lear :*

“No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison;  
We two alone will sing like birds in the cage.  
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down  
And ask of thee forgiveness; so we'll live  
And pray and sing, and tell old tales and laugh  
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues

Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them, too—  
Who loses and who gains, who's in, who's out;  
And take upon us the mystery of things  
As if we were God's spies. And we'll wear out  
In prison packs and sects of great ones  
That ebb and flow by the moon."

*King Lear.*

Which of these methods is artistically preferable can hardly be determined. If the rhythm is regarded as ornamental it should be constructive, should emphasize the metre as architectural ornaments emphasize the main divisions of a building. If the rhythm is regarded as expressive of emotions, as an element connected closely with the thought, it must not be sacrificed to metre. In either case it must be varied, for machine-made uniformity is unnatural and hateful, varied, not lawlessly, but subject to the unwritten laws of emotional succession which genius obeys because they are part of its nature. The *Sensitive Plant*, one of the most perfect structures in the language, exemplifies the variation in rhythm with which the poet clothes his metrical structure, as does the *Skylark*. In *Memoriam* exemplifies a combination of the two methods, the lines being sometimes end-stopped and sometimes overflowing. The rhythms are varied and of a noble simplicity, whether overlapping the metre or coinciding with it.

The musical element of poetry may be made

too prominent. Words are symbols of meaning as well as sounds. If treated as sounds merely, a structure may be created of metrical and rhythmical perfection which is still not poetry in the highest sense any more than Mother Goose's melodies, some of which have remarkable structural and acoustic qualities. The "fundamental brainwork" of the artist is not only putting words into form, it is putting thought into words. A magnificent poem of Mr. Swinburne's, the *By the North Sea*—as musical a combination of words as can be imagined—is too musical, because it is metrical and rhythmical at the expense of definite imagery. Music furnishes poetry with a part of its working tools, but not with its material. In the following quotations the words are treated almost as if they were notes and nothing else. Alliteration, assonance, rhyme, metre, and rhythm, in admirable combination, illustrate the limit of the musical elements in verse :

"O delight of the headland and beaches!

O desire of the wind on the wold!

More glad than a man's when it reaches

That end which it sought from of old.

And the palm of possession is dreary

To the sense that in search of it sinned;

But nor satisfied ever nor weary

Is ever the wind.

"Miles and miles and miles of desolation,

Leagues on leagues on leagues without a change;

Sign or token of some eldest nation  
Here would make the strange land not so strange;  
Time forgotten, yea, since time's creation  
Seem these borders when the sea-birds range."

The following lyric of Shelley's, written to a young lady who had sent him some flowers, shows how a very slight and not particularly just thought, compounded with the musical elements of verse, becomes capable of summoning a vast range of indefinite suggestions:

"Madonna, wherefore hast thou sent to me  
Sweet basil and mignonette,  
Embleming love and health, which never yet  
In the same wreath might be?"

"Alas, and they are wet!  
Is it with thy kisses or thy tears?  
For never rain or dew  
Such fragrance drew  
From plant or flower; the very doubt endears  
My sadness ever new,  
The sighs I breathe, the tears I shed for thee."

The stanzaic structure of this is irregular. It seems as if the poet had intended to write in iambic lines of five and three accents alternately, when he suddenly arrested the metre with the cry,

"Alas, and they are wet!"

Then beginning with a four-accent line,

"Is it with thy kisses or thy tears?"

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he repeats with slight variation the metre of the first five lines, ending with the prolonged line,

“The sighs I breathe, the tears I shed for thee.”

The lyric has therefore a mark of spontaneity. The opening thought that love and health are incompatible is not altogether a sound and true one; nevertheless, there is enough in the idea that all joys consume themselves and pass, and that strong feeling eats out the heart, and that pain and happiness are close together in the emotional life, to fill the lines. The feeling is egotistic and temporary, but that is as it should be in a lyric which is the expression of a mood. The musical form is fitted to the sentiment. The lines are full of sibilants, which sound like suppressed sighs. There are no strong, ringing words. The phrases are short, as if the speaker drew his breath in pain. The rhythm suits the emotion. The sounds of the words are beautiful as put together. No other words would produce exactly the same effect. Slight and simple as they are, we recognize them as the product of genius, because the form-elements are fitted to each other and to the sentiment.

Prose differs from verse in that it is not built upon a metrical framework. The English language is accented in prose utterance as much as it is reading verse, though with much less uniformity of stress. It is therefore easy to pick out here and there accent-sequences which will

make up an iambic line. The combination of the dactyl and trochee is very common even in ordinary conversation. "Metrical framework," in the third sentence above, is an example, as is "dactyl and trochee." Some single words, like "association," take on this cadence. If similar combinations occur too frequently or in similar positions in the sentences, especially at the end, they are apt to force a similarity of rhythm which is unnatural and unpleasant. Let four or even three consecutive sentences of about the same length end with the dactylo-trochaic combination, and we perceive at once a monotony of cadence disagreeable in the extreme. Every sentence has a rhythm, if it is any way emphatic, unless it is very short, because emphasis or emotion forces a flux and reflux—in fact, forces a rhythm. But in prose the emotion is temperate usually, and, though varied, flows equably. Two things are to be avoided: first, groups of similar accent-sequences—that is, fragments of metrical lines of definite construction; and, second, the recurrence of similar rhythms, which is a sequence of the first mistake and also of a uniformity of sentence formation. If the prose is elevated or impassioned this rule is somewhat modified, a rhythm is not unnatural. Still, the rule holds good, the rhythms of prose must be varied, and the management of these variations makes prose artistic.

In argumentative prose, rhythm is subordi-

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nated until the point or issue is well established. The summing up may properly have a triumphant ring. In narrative, rhythm has no place, it distracts the attention from the sequence of events. But when the story is told and the feelings are to be aroused the prose may properly take on some tone-color and subdued rhythmical cadence. Each writer has his characteristic set of cadences, which he is apt to repeat too often when emotionally excited. Hawthorne's rhythms are delicately beautiful, but have a note of sameness. Webster's rare rhythmical passages are of the highest order of music, and are in keeping with the dignified and elevated tone of his thought. Burke's orations are in many places marked by noble, sonorous cadences, for he was an imaginative reasoner, and subject to emotional excitement. In fact, passages of rhythmical prose, not measured prose like the singsong of Dickens, are scattered through our literature, and are the natural expression of serious or enthusiastic moods. In Charles Lamb's *Dream Children* his fancy touches playfully the idea of what his real children might have been. Suddenly the dream children become real, no longer figments of his imagination but embodiments of that longing for offspring, of that sense of incompleteness of life which weighs on the spirit of the childless. At once the rhythm of the sentences which had before been full of the joyous impulsiveness of

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childhood rises to the pathetic dignity of a dirge for lost hopes :

"Then I told how for seven long years, in hope sometimes, and sometimes in despair, yet persisting ever, I courted the fair Alice W\*\*\*n, and—as much as children could understand, I explained to them what coyness and difficulty and denial meant in maidens—when, suddenly turning to Alice, the soul of the first Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of representment that I became in doubt which one of them stood before me, or whose that bright hair was; and while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding and still receding till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which without speech strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech: 'We are not of Alice nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice call Bartram father. We are nothing and less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence and a name.'"

It will be found that the position of no single word in that exquisite passage—nor, indeed, in the entire essay can be changed without injury. For instance, the first sentence begins,

"Then I told how for seven long years, in hope sometimes, and sometimes in despair."

Suppose we try to change the place of the adverb and read,

"For seven long years, sometimes in hope and in despair sometimes,"

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we find that the prose rhythm is mangled. There are no sentences in which the rhythm is identical, though a similarity of cadence marks them all with solemn pathos. It is very evident the essay is a product of creative energy working under excitement or emotion, and obeying inscrutable laws of rhythm which dictate the means of expression proper for that state of feeling.

Probably no man, except Shakespeare, was ever gifted with a finer ear for the subtle harmonies of words than Milton. In the seventeenth century the art of prose was undeveloped, for the conception of the unity of the sentence and of the paragraph was confused by familiarity with Latin involutions, which, when carried over into an uninflected language, are sometimes awkward enough. The following quotation consists of three sentences only, whereas it should be divided into eight at least. But no one would deny to them, especially to the second, a grave and noble music, nor that they are full of delicate assonances :

“Fourthly, marriage is a covenant, the very being whereof consists not in a forced cohabitation and counterfeited performance of duties, but in unfeigned love and peace; and of matrimonial love no doubt but that was chiefly meant, which by the ancient sages was thus parabled: that Love, if he be not twin-born, yet hath a brother wondrous like him, called Anteros; whom while

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he seeks all about, his chance is to meet with many false and figuring desires, that wander singly up and down in his likeness; by them in their borrowed garb, Love, though not wholly blind, as poets wrong him, yet having but one eye, as being born an archer aiming, and that eye not the quickest in this dark region here below, which is not Love's proper sphere, partly out of the simplicity and credulity which is native to him, often deceived, embraces and consorts him with these obvious and suborned striplings, as if they were his mother's own sons; for so he thinks them while they subtly keep themselves most on his blind side. But after a while, as his manner is, when soaring up into the high tower of his Apogœum, above the shadow of the earth, he darts out the direct rays of his most piercing eyesight upon the impostures and trim disguises that were used with him, and discerns that this is not his genuine brother, as he imagined; he has no longer the power to hold fellowship with such a personated mate: for straight his arrows loose their golden heads, and shed their purple feathers, his silken braids untwine and slip their knots, and that original and fiery virtue given him by fate all of a sudden goes out, and leaves him undeified and despoiled of all his force; till, finding Anteros at last, he kindles and repairs the almost faded ammunition of his deity by the reflection of a coequal and homogeneal fire. Thus mine author sung it to me; and, by the leave of those who would be counted the only grave ones, this is no amatorious novel (though, to be wise and skilful in these matters, men heretofore of greatest name in virtue have esteemed it one of the highest arcs that human contemplation circling upward can make from the globy sea whereon she stands); but this is a

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deep and serious verity, showing us that love in marriage cannot live nor subsist unless it be mutual; and when love cannot be, there can be left of wedlock nothing but the empty husk of an outside matrimony, as undelightful and unpleasing to God as any other kind of hypocrisy."

The prose of many of the seventeenth-century writers consists of long sentences, which have a tendency to fall into clauses of nearly equal length, and therefore approximate to a metrical structure. The rhythm is frequently very beautiful and appropriate to the thought. Bishop Taylor's sermons are examples of the florid ecclesiastical style, overloaded with ornament like a renaissance building, but poetically conceived and full of exuberant life. The following from the Sermon on Marriage is not marked by the assonances that distinguish the quotation from Milton. The rhythms, though delicately varied, are more uniform and superficial, and fit a less strenuous thought :

"For there is nothing can please a man without love; and if a man be weary of the wise discourses of the Apostles and of the innocency of an even and a private fortune, or hates peace or a fruitful year, he hath reaped thorns and thistles from the choicest flowers of paradise, for nothing can sweeten felicity itself but love; but when a man dwells in love, then the eyes of his wife are fair as the light of heaven. She is a fountain sealed, and he can quench his thirst and ease his cares and lay his

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sorrow down on her lap, and can retire home to his sanctuary and refectory and his gardens of sweetness and chaste refreshments. No man can tell but he that loves his children how many delicious accents make a man's heart dance in the pretty conversation of those dear pledges. Their childishness, their stammering, their little angers, their innocence, their imperfections, their necessities are so many little emanations of joy and comfort to him that delights in their persons and society; but he that loves not his wife and children feeds a lioness at home and broods a nest of sorrows, and blessing itself cannot make him happy. So that all the commandments of God enjoining a man to love his wife are nothing but so many necessities and capacities of joy. She that is loved is safe, and he that loves is joyful. Love is a union of all things excellent. It contains in it proportion and satisfaction and rest and confidence, and I wish that this were so much proceeded in that the heathens themselves could not go beyond us in this virtue and its proper and attendant happiness. Tiberius Macchus chose to die for the safety of his wife, and methinks for a Christian to do so should be no hard thing, for many servants will die for their masters and many gentlemen will die for their friend; but the examples are not so many of those that are ready to do it for their dearest relatives, and yet some there have been."

The difference between the rhythm of verse and the rhythms of prose is that the first is subject to a predetermined scheme of line and stanza. The emotional expression is confined by law and must energize within limits. It can express itself by modification within those limits, and also by

combining the rhythms of the scheme with the natural rhythms of the sentence and clause. The rhythms of prose are not subject to any special legislation; nevertheless, they are not lawless, but are governed by correspondencies between rhythmical movement and flow of emotional energy, which cannot be stated in a formula any more than can tones, gestures, or the effects of certain musical chords. Mr. Theodore Watts says :

“The proseman and the poet are both artists in expression—the poet the highest, because he gives us an example of freedom under a law we can comprehend. The charm of the inevitable is combined with the charm of the individual. The proseman, from the very fact that he is not sustained by a prescribed framework, may fall much below the poet's average level in force of emotional language, and even when he is unconsciously obedient to laws his triumph is less than that of the poet, because he surmounts lesser difficulties.”

Sameness in cadence in the prose-writer is apt to be disagreeable, as in Macaulay, and in many of the prose-writers of the eighteenth century, because emotion flows tumultuously and is never monotonous, unless, perhaps, it be the emotion of grief. Repetitions of the same cadence in a poem are admissible, because they are prescribed by the laws of poetry. At the same time the poet must obey the larger laws of emotional rhythm, as well as the rhythmical laws of poetry,

and must blend and temper the two into a unity. The blank-verse spoken by Macbeth, Lear, and Othello is always verse, and subject to the laws of verse, but, in addition, it is full of the nobler emotional rhythms ; and in each case it is different, because the emotional natures of these men are different. A lesser artist, like Dryden or Milton, allows all his characters to express themselves in the same rhythm. It is only the highest dramatic sense that can divine the language of individual passion, and put into words the beatings of the heart of a man.

In our day emotion is repressed. Possibly men hate and love and reverence and enjoy as fully as ever. Certainly they do not allow themselves to be carried away with their feelings as they once did. Toleration rules. We are organized into a society where the rebellious member finds comrades only in criminals. Vigorous expression is indecorous. Good form is imperative. There is a general impression that the man who is much in earnest has not considered both sides of the question, and is exaggerating the importance of the objects of his desire or indignation ; that all things are ground out by law in a universe where individual feeling is futile to delay or hurry the inevitable. We therefore have little use for the emotional rhythms, except for those that express the quieter mental conditions. Read the verse written nowadays. It will scan, but it invariably



lacks the higher rhythm. It is correct, but it has no heart-beat. It is like the steed of the knight that Heine speaks of, which was perfectly formed and of an excellent color and well groomed and finely caparisoned—in all respects an admirable horse. It had but one fault. It was dead.

Now, poetry is the mirror of the age. Its highest function is not to paint a picture, but to express emotion. Granting that the great artist is a personal force, and that his advent is a matter of chance, the general tone of the verse of any epoch echoes the tone of the time. If now it is largely unemotional in expression, though perhaps not more so than it was during the eighteenth century, it must be because the age of quick and passionate feeling has passed and with it the need for emotional expression further than the vague means afforded by music. Furthermore, the rhythms of prose have become for the same reasons modified towards an unobtrusive, quiet movement corresponding to the even flow of equable arguments and colorless statement. That this is the effect of a certain phase of civilization can hardly be questioned. Whether this phase will last another century depends on causes altogether too deep for examination. Meanwhile we must go back to our ancestors if we wish to find in rhythm any adequate expression of human passion or to form any conception of the scope of imaginative literature.

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE PHRASAL POWER

THE term phrase usually means a group of words that form a part of speech. The noun with its adjective remains a noun, the verb with its adverb remains a verb, in grammatical effect. But in literary criticism the term phrase is taken to mean something more extended than in grammar. It means a set of words which may be considered together by reason of their artistic or æsthetic value in combination. It covers simple combinations where the adjective and noun are welded together by the imagination, like Spenser's "Sea-shouldering whales," and also entire sentences which embody an image. A proverb or an epigram is a "phrasis," or saying.

In this view it is not taking a derogatory view of the poet's work to call him a "great phrase-maker." For what does a poet really do—what does he originate? He puts words in form, not a commonplace or worn-out form, but a form which means something. He does not make the words he uses. The people make the words and

fill them with a thousand subtle associations by countless repetitions and constant usage. The poet groups these words into new combinations. Words have character as sounds and as symbols, and it is constantly found that they have the power of coalescing in groups of two or more to form a new thought-symbol, somewhat as atoms coalesce to form an organic molecule. And as language is alive words are continually changing, and each age produces a new set of combinations. The immense power of the phrase is evident to any observer of contemporary history. Even the "empty phrase" has temporary weight, and the "fallacious phrase" is temporary argument. The felicitous phrase and the great phrase are artistic units.

Nor is the poet a thought-originator. Thoughts grow with the people. Everybody contributes something in the way of comment or modifications of prevailing notions. A very large portion is futile, erroneous, and weak. There is a continual struggle of ideas going on, and in time the strongest, and in the end the truest, survive, although the foolish ones show for a time great fertility and power of propagation. Philosophers and thinkers do little more than select and codify, and by the time they have completed their task their system begins to become obsolete. The poet feels this conflict of thought, he is conscious that a new phase of emotional tendency, a new

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attitude towards life, is being taken up by numbers of men. He brings the subconscious generalization of the age to the surface and makes it articulate. He invents the phrases which express the general tendencies and sentiments of the public. Browning and Shakespeare embody in poetry the thought of their time. Phrases are the stuff of which this embodiment is constructed. In this view it is not derogatory to call the poet a phrase-maker rather than a thinker, since the phrase interprets thought and gives it carrying power, and since the thought is not the product of individuals but of many groups of individuals who represent the brain of the race.

It is largely through songs and detached phrases that poetry touches ordinary life. The poem as a whole, as a work of art, appeals powerfully to minds of a certain order, but fragments of it pass into the current speech as proverbs. They add a new element of power to language, and the use of them reacts on the mental flexibility of the race. Pope's verse is now entirely detached from contact with the public mind, but many of Pope's phrases are elements of popular speech, and have so far taken up the character of words that they are rarely isolated by quotation-marks. A new word coming into the language in the natural way is a valuable acquisition to our mental equipment, and a new phrase, even if slang, is hardly less so. Pope wrote,

"Who shall decide, when doctors disagree?"

and though the question was not new, "alliteration's artful aid" gave it a pungency not diminished by time. Pope's phrases are not packed with emotional intensity. They come under the head of the "dexterous phrase." Among them are:

"Die of a rose in aromatic pain."

"Whatever is, is right."

"The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind."

"The last and greatest art, the art to blot."

"The feast of reason and the flow of soul."

"Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

"The world forgetting, by the world forgot."

"Do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame."

"It is not poetry, but prose run mad."

"At every word a reputation dies."

"Welcome the coming, speed the going guest."

And many other stock quotations. They have the antithetical, epigrammatic flavor of social wit, where the form is more regarded than the substance. They lack the far higher quality of humor. But these and many others of Pope's phrases have made a hit. Not only are they pretty securely lodged in the memory of the read-

ing world, but they have filtered down to the general public alongside of Campbell's

"Distance lends enchantment to the view,"

Sterne's

"God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,"

and Campbell's

"Like angel visits, few and far between."

It is a little odd that Campbell's form of this phrase—"few and far between"—should be the popular one in preference to the earlier form from Blair's *Grave*, "short and far between." "Short and far between" would seem to be the more logical form, for if they were "few," they must necessarily be "far between," unless of inordinate length, but "alliteration's artful aid" seems to have floated Campbell's phrase.

We have already spoken of the musical quality of words, and we shall hereafter speak of their descriptive or pictorial quality. Now, a phrase may be musical or it may be picturesque, but in considering the phrasal quality attention should be restricted to the fact that a set of words in combination have sometimes an intellectual effect far greater than could be foreseen from an examination of them separately, and greater than they logically should have. They reinforce each other by juxtaposition, so as to bring out a novel and

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complex thought. In the higher manifestation of the phrase power it seems as if the writer discovered novel combinations by clairvoyance, by an illumination from a central light in him, penetrating the cloud of ideas that surrounds every soul. In its lower manifestations the writer manufactures his phrases consciously, puts words together and tries them, and perhaps hits on something literary and pleasing. In both cases it is to the relation of compounded words to the thought rather than to their relation to musical sound or to pictorial effect that the expression "phrasal power" is meant to refer. Nevertheless, the expressions "musical phrase" or "descriptive phrase" are not illegitimate, but refer to a different range of qualities.

With this restriction we may grade phrases as : First, the dexterous phrase — witty, neat, epigrammatical, workmanlike. Pope's phrases, already quoted, would fall under this head. Second, the felicitous phrase, which has some of the quality of the inevitableness—that is, the phrase hits a certain idea so justly that the two seem to have been made for each other, and to be incapable of separate existence ; but the idea is one of sweetness rather than strength, and the phrase has grace rather than power. Third, the dynamic phrase, or the great phrase, which embodies a profound and suggestive thought with a certain ruggedness and carelessness, and with more of

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the quality of inevitableness or absoluteness, as if it were a natural formation. The phrase then satisfies not only our æsthetic but our broader ethical perceptions. It seems to give a novel aspect of universal truth—a glimpse of knowledge which we could obtain in no other way. It completes and sums up a thousand forgotten arguments. The "dynamic phrase" reveals, the "felicitous phrase" illuminates, the "dexterous phrase" decorates the thought. Pope may be taken as an example of the maker of the "dexterous phrase," Gray of the "felicitous phrase," and Shakespeare, who throws off dexterous phrases and felicitous phrases with careless ease, now and then strikes out a dynamic phrase which has the electrical energy of all nature behind it. Emerson is the only American who has originated a dynamic phrase. James is the most skillful manipulator of the dexterous phrase. This outline classification of phrase-quality must be taken with the reservation that phrases partake more or less of all these characters, just as men partake in different proportions of the qualities of noble strength, sweetness, and mundane skill, and are never perfect examples of any one.

Gray is as good an example as any one of the creators of the felicitous phrase. Goldsmith partakes of this quality, which does not stir so much as delight. The *Elegy* moves us very gently. Its phrases, its music, its philosophy, are all in

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perfect accord. The transitoriness of the individual and the vanity of human achievement are expressed in felicitous phrases set to "slow music." The phrases embody an imagery of the same tone as the thought and the metric movement. This balance of elements is an artistic quality of a high order, and the poem will always be a favorite, for everybody can apprehend all parts of it. These phrases, among others, are perfect in their kind :

"The short and simple annals of the poor."

"The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

"Can flattery soothe the dull, cold ear of Death?"

"Full many a flower is born to blush unseen."

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene."

"Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife."

"The noiseless tenor of their way."

There is more reach and power in the Scottish phrase,

"I'm wearing awa' to the land o' the leal,"

than in any of these, but they are all very beautiful phrases, although there is a certain resignation and hopelessness expressed in most of them, which, as individual mortals, we must all feel, but which, as members of a race that is enduring and developing, and is, at least, the highest manifes-

tation of life presented to us, we ought not to dwell on. But in criticising phrases we have no right to find fault with the tone of thought as reflected in the phrase construction. In Gray's *Elegy* this reflection is absolutely perfect.

Emerson is a great phrase-maker. Usually he does not go much beyond the felicitous phrase, but sometimes he hits an expression so just and suggestive that it is taken up as a familiar quotation, becomes as it were a new word, a medium of communication between soul and soul, forever after. Such expressions we find repeated everywhere, they come to our minds on certain occasions as having an absolute fitness for the time and place.

To quote some of the best known, he says of those about the fireplace, during the snow-storm, that they are—

“Enclosed

In a tumultuous privacy of storm.”

Of the snow-bird, he says—

“Here was this atom in full breath,  
Hurling defiance at vast Death.”

An ordinary writer would have used the adjective “chill” instead of “vast,” to contrast the cheery life of the bird with the stillness of the wintry woods, but “vast” is a far better adjective, for it contrasts the vigorous, infinitesimal

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life of the snow-bird with the all-prevailing, vague presence of Death, suggested by winter. The benumbing influence of cold has already been alluded to in the earlier lines of the poem, and "vast" brings out the greatness of the force counter to life.

Many of Emerson's phrases, like—

"Here once the embattled farmers stood,  
And fired the shot heard round the world,"

or,

"They builded better than they knew,"

have been repeated so often that we hesitate to use them. This should not be, for phrases like those cannot become hackneyed. They have an absolute quality. They present a phase of thought that no other words can, and we might as reasonably try to avoid some of the idioms we have inherited from the Pilgrim fathers. "Good use" does not apply to them. They are the elements of literary speech.

But in many cases Emerson's phrases are of a lower class. They come under the head of the "dexterous phrase," neat, apposite, original, but lacking the inevitable quality, giving pleasure, perhaps even delight, but not adding permanently to the stock of literary material. Sometimes they come perilously near to being artificial phrases or forced phrases—phrases for phrases'

sake—the making of which is the bane of so many writers. Nevertheless, Emerson is a great phrase-maker, and this, quite as much as his fairness and catholicity of thought, gives him his place, permanent and assured, in the annals of literature.

Shakespeare's power as a phrase-maker is no less great than his powers of a higher quality. No one has contributed more expressions that are as "familiar in our mouths as household words." As his phrases are adapted to his characters, many of them have the idiomatic force of folk-proverbs. His more poetic and philosophical phrases are woven naturally into the conversation of Prospero, Hamlet, Macbeth, and others of his characters. In the *Sonnets*, where he is not speaking in an assumed character, though possibly under the domination of an assumed—it may be a remembered—mood, occur the wonderful phrases :

"A love builded far from accident."

"Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth."

"The expense of spirit in a waste of shame is lust in action."

"The prophetic soul of the wide world, dreaming on things to come."

"Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang."

"The sessions of sweet, silent thought."

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And many others of truth and force compacted with the structure of his rhyme. What an admirable expression is that of Othello's where he speaks of himself as one who "being wrought," is "perplexed in the extreme." The word "extreme" sounds like a cry of mental anguish. Indeed, the entire last act of *Othello* is wonderful for the power of the phrases, no less than for its dramatic, emotional intensity.

It will be better to leave Shakespeare, in whom all the powers are conjoined, and take up some writers in whom the phrase-making power is more isolated and therefore more in evidence. But there is one peculiarity about Shakespeare's compound adjectives or double adjectives, which, though not an important matter, is worth specifying. He nearly always joins a concrete adjective with one signifying some abstract quality, so that the two reinforce each other. Thus—

"The ponderous and marble jaws" (of the tomb).

"The lofty and shrill-sounding throat" (of the cock).

"The thin and wholesome blood."

"Wild and whirling words."

"This dread and black complexion."

"The sear, the yellow leaf."

"Some sweet oblivious antidote."

"A nipping and an eager air."

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"The bloody and invisible hand."

"A robustious periwig-pated fellow."

"The chaste and unsmirched brow."

"The kind, life-rendering pelican."

"A slippery and subtle knave."

"Her fair and unpolluted flesh."

"The wealthy, curled darlings."

"A malignant and a turbaned Turk."

"Sulphurous and tormenting flames."

"Sulphurous and thought-executing fires."

"In the most terrible and nimble stroke."

"The extravagant and erring spirit."

This list might be indefinitely increased. Of course it is not a mannerism, for an equal number of the opposite usage could be gathered. It is worth examining because one of the adjectives calls up a concrete image and the other adds some abstract quality, and because the two adjectives heighten each other and form a unified and striking characterization. It is quite possible that some of Shakespeare's contemporaries used the same method.

Milton's adjectives are generally compounded in the classic fashion, like the "rosy-fingered Aurora," "thy amber-dropping hair," "the rushy-fringed bank," "tinsel-slippered feet," "the coral-

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paven bed" (of the river), "earth-shaking Neptune," "vermeil - tintured lip," "love - darting eyes." These are Homeric echoes. The two words, frequently an adjective and a noun, are compounded into one, sometimes with beautiful effect. Shakespeare's double epithets are usually made of two adjectives, by the conjunction "and," not by the hyphen. More amplitude of characterization seems to flow from the double adjective than from the compound adjective, though, possibly, no more concrete picturesqueness. Milton's "glassy, cool, translucent wave" is a very beautiful grouping of attributes, but they are all physical, whereas one of the adjectives used by Shakespeare attributes some moral quality to the object. Of this double adjective but few instances are found in Milton. He says,

"An old and haughty nation."

"The forlorn and wandering passenger."

"Ripe and frolic of his full-grown age."

"Fond, intemperate thirst."

"The baffling eastern scout, the morn."

"The light, fantastic toe."

"Majestic, unaffected style."

In most of these the object is doubly described, but from one side only, whereas the instances from Shakespeare give us a glimpse of the object

from contrasted points of view. Milton's "forlorn and wandering passenger" is the only one that has a Shakespearian sound. There is nothing so picturesque as Othello's "A malignant and a turbaned Turk," though "dim, religious light" is as powerful.

In phrase-making, however, Milton shows the readiness and vividness of the great writer. In his verse he seems to have been largely preoccupied with the musical quality. Still, many striking phrases are scattered over his pages, such as:

"Confusion worse confounded."

"Darkness visible."

"The silver lining of the cloud."

"Music through the empty vaulted night, at every fall smoothing the raven down of darkness till it smiled."

"Shakespeare, dear son of memory, great heir of fame."

"Notes with many a winding bout of sweetness long drawn out."

"The blind Fury with the abhorred shears."

"New Presbyter is but old Priest writ large."

But in his prose, when, as was the custom in his day, no attention was paid to sentence construction, Milton's power of incisive expression has free play. His pamphlets on divorce show his command over this minor form of literary



power very decidedly, and no doubt his controversy against Salmasius would have been marked by the same vigorous speech-forms had it been written in a living tongue instead of ponderous book-Latin. He characterizes marriage where radical incompatibility of temper is discovered as:

"The pining of a sad spirit, wedded to loneliness."

"He finds himself fast to an uncomplying discord of nature."

"Foiling and profaning that mystery of joy and union with a polluting sadness and perpetual distemper."

And with many other phrases of equal point and vigor.

The phrasing of Sir Thomas Browne, Milton's contemporary, is characterized by literary ingenuity and a certain quaint affectation that has an original flavor and a charm of its own, though his great attraction lies in the rhythm of his sentences and the fine quality of his thought. He, too, is disfigured by writing in an artificial language which, however, like the stiff ruff and long waist of the period, could not altogether hide natural grace and symmetry. He says:

"Look not for whales in the Euxine or expect great matters where they are not to be found. Seek not for profundity in shallowness, or fertility in a wilderness. Place not the expectations of great happiness here below, or think to find heaven on earth; wherein we must

be content with embryon felicities and fruitions of doubtful faces: for the circle of our felicities makes but short arches. In every clime we are in a periscian state; and with our light our shadow and darkness walk about us. Our contentments stand upon the top of pyramids, ready to fall off, and the insecurity of their enjoyments abrupteth our tranquilities. What we magnify is magnificent, but like to the Colossus, noble without, stuff with rubbage and coarse metal within. Even the sun, whose glorious outside we behold, may have dark and smoky entrails. In vain we admire the lustre of anything seen; that which is truly inglorious is invisible."—*Christian Morals*.

Charles Lamb is a maker of the dexterous phrase. His genuine kindness of heart, his fondness for the recent past surviving in out-of-the-way corners, or in speech or prejudice or manner or dress, and his excellent judgment of the dramatic art, are the solid qualities that give value to his literary work. As a literary workman his power of felicitous phrase-making sometimes carries him beyond the limits of well-balanced art. His head is full of the quaint phrases of the seventeenth century and he can hardly forego availing himself of every possible opening for quoting a phrase having the flavor of antiquity. His own phrases have a taint of artificiality, even when most felicitous. As a rule, affectation is unpleasant and tiresome, but we sometimes notice a surcharging of manner resulting from enthusiastic

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study of some literary or artistic subject—an unconscious imitation of the style and manner of thought of an epoch in which the student has lived for years in imagination, which can hardly be called affectation because it is unconscious. This gives a pleasant archaic flavor to much of Lamb's phrasing.

"Reader, would'st thou know what true peace and quiet mean? would'st thou find a refuge from the noises and clamors of the multitude? would'st thou enjoy at once solitude and society? would'st thou possess the depth of thine own spirit in stillness, without being shut out from the consolatory faces of the species? would'st thou be alone, yet accompanied; solitary yet not desolate; singular yet not without some one to keep thee in countenance—a unit in aggregate; a simple in composite? Come with me into a Quaker's meeting.

"Dost thou love silence deep as that 'before the winds were made,' go not out into the wilderness, descend not into the profundities of the earth, shut not up thy case-ments, pour not wax into the little cells of thy ears with little-faithed, self-mistrusting Ulysses; retire with me into a Quaker's meeting.

"What is the stillness of the desert compared with this place? What the uncommunicating muteness of fishes? Here the goddess reigns and revels. 'Boreas and Cesiæ and Argæstis loud' do not, with their inter-confounding uproars, more augment the brawl, nor the waves of the blown Baltic with their clubbed sounds, than their opposite. 'Silence, her sacred self,' is multiplied and rendered more intense by numbers and by sympathy. She, too,

hath her deeps that call unto deeps. Negation itself hath a positive more and less, and cased eyes would seem to obscure the great obscurity of midnight.

"The Abbey Church of Westminster hath nothing so solemn, so spirit-soothing as the naked walls and benches of a Quaker's meeting. Here are no tombs, inscriptions, or

" 'Sands, ignoble things

Dropt from the ruined sides of Kings.'

But here is something which throws Antiquity herself into the foreground—*Silence*, eldest of things—language of old Night—primitive discourser—to which the insolent decays of mouldering grandeur have arrived by a violent and, as we may say, unnatural progression."—*Essays of Elia*.

Wordsworth had the power of striking out some great phrases. His narrow self-concentration and artistic wilfulness were outweighed by the truth and spirituality of his conception of man's intimate relation to external nature, and the unalloyed delight he felt in the panorama of the out-door world. But we are now speaking of workmanship in details, not of philosophical attitude nor even of constructive power. Wordsworth's great phrases are rare. They have the musical quality and the quality of limpidity, and of fitting into their places in the poem. They are rarely disfigured by inversions, or, at least, if they are the inversions are natural ones.

When he says of the girl growing up in intimate communion with nature :

“Hers shall be the breathing balm  
And hers the silence and the calm  
Of mute, insensate things,”

or,

“She shall lean her ear  
In many a secret place,  
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,  
And beauty, born of murmuring sound,  
Shall pass into her face,”

we recognize the justness of the thought and the delicacy of the expression. If we can drop our sense of the melody of the phrases for the moment, we see that they have great descriptive power in spite of their simplicity ; perhaps, indeed, on account of their simplicity. Again he says of the field-song of the Highland girl :

“Such thrilling voice was never heard  
In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird,  
Breaking the silence of the seas  
Among the farthest Hebrides.  
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow  
For old, unhappy far-off things,  
And battles long ago.”

This does not illustrate the power of epithet—Wordsworth's skill does not lie in that direction—but it gives an impression of the melancholy

character of Celtic song and its peculiar affinity for lonely nature. It is beautiful phrasing, for sound and imagery and sentiment harmonize. The following well-worn quotations show that Wordsworth sometimes came very near to striking out a dynamic phrase :

"The beauty of promise, that which sets  
The budding rose above the rose full grown."

Of childhood he says :

"For thought of our past years in me doth breed  
Perpetual benediction."

"A creature  
Moving about in worlds not realized."

"Shadowy recollections,  
Which, be they what they may,  
Are yet the fountain-light of all our day:  
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing."

"Our noisy years seem moments in the being  
Of the eternal silence."

There is a marked lack of warmth, color, and passion in Wordsworth's poetry. His was a Puritanic enthusiasm for virtue and nature and humanity. He has the poetic earnestness but not the poetic glow. In consequence he falls far below Milton and Shakespeare in the richness of his adjectives, and below Keats, whose imagination was more sensuous and luxuriant, and who apparently took more delight in color in nature

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than Wordsworth did, though perhaps no more in form and light and shade. In fact, the passion for beauty of color and rich texture seems to be quite distinct from the love of beauty of outline and motion, though both may coexist in the same person in almost any proportions. It would seem, too, as if the austere love of moral truth were more harmonious with the latter than with the former. Light, rather than color, characterizes the passion for righteousness, which is the noblest characteristic of man. In Wordsworth we see an insensibility to one phase of the beautiful combined with the austere self-esteem and rigid ethics of the Puritan. And these characteristics can be traced in the minutiae of his phrasing. Keats is the best instance of poetic imagination of the more sensuous and luxuriant kind. Though he died at the age of twenty-five, he was so thoroughly an artist that his work is characteristic of his mind. He says that he "looked upon fine phrases like a lover," and in his earliest publications we find the instinct for color and luxuriance in such characterizations as: "the lush laburnum" and the "ardent marigolds," which last reminds us of Milton's "glowing violet." His love of the beautiful is shown in phrases like—

"Sweet peas on tiptoe for a flight,  
With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white."

"The chequered shadows."

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"The swarms of minnows  
Swaying their wavy bodies against the streams  
To taste the luxury of sunny beams  
Tempered with coolness."

"The bloomy grapes laughing from green attire."

"A butterfly with golden wings broad-parted."


These citations might be multiplied to show that Keats in his phrasing gives us not only the shapes but the colors of things, and that his world-vision is of a luxuriant concreteness, flushed with warm and rosy color, like the world-vision of the young Shakespeare, the Shakespeare of *Romeo and Juliet*. They cause us to believe that no certain answer can be given to the question, "Did literature lose most by the burial of Milton during the best years of his life in controversial politics or by the death of John Keats before the best years of his life had come?"

Let us briefly consider two of our modern poets with reference to this question of the descriptive phrase, Tennyson and Browning. This, I need not repeat, is apart from the marked musical and lyrical power of the two great artists, apart, too, from the marked ability of Browning of putting into verse certain defiant, doubting, and questioning moods of the modern spirit. Browning has not struck out many great phrases. His thought is linked and involved so that a sentence or two must be quoted. He is a master of de-

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scription, but one must read a passage like the second part of *Waring* or the whole of *Childe Roland* or *A Grammarian's Funeral* in order to comprehend one of his pictures. He does not flash things on his readers in a phrase; but in manipulating the phrase so as to bring in the rhyme and yet illuminate the thought he is unrivalled. His rhymes are often very odd and unexpected, but they never seem forced. This is especially true of his double rhymes, a line ending apt in other hands to degenerate into affectation. Browning manipulates the phrase so as to bring in the rhyme ending in a novel manner. He is released by the constitution of his mind from another restraint—that is, the necessity of making himself readily intelligible—and in consequence can exhaust his mental energy on the problem of getting his phrase into his line. His phrasing has therefore great force and manliness because he does not stop to make it neat. In *A Grammarian's Funeral*, a poem far beyond the powers of any man now living, the phrasing is massive and vigorous throughout, and seems unhampered by the very difficult metre. There are, however, no great quotable phrases—the poem is too compact. Each part belongs to the whole, nothing can be detached like the frieze from the Parthenon and set up to be admired by itself or copied and hung up on household walls. This poem illustrates his marvellous power of putting



phrases in verse form. Every second line of the one hundred and fifty is connected with the double rhyme. In one place I thought at one time that he had used a word simply because it rhymed. After reaching the mountain summit where they were to make the lonely grave of the lonely scholar, he says :

“ Well, here’s the platform, here’s the proper place :  
Hail to your purlieus,  
All ye highfliers of the feathered race,  
Swallows and curlews.”

“ Curlews,” I thought, were wading-birds that lived on the shore, and I accused Browning of bringing in the word simply to rhyme with “ purlieus.” To do so would have been utterly foreign to his nature, and I soon discovered that the curlew resorts to the mountains in summer. No doubt Browning had seen swallows and curlews flying over a lonely rocky ridge before he wrote the lines. No man could be less likely to use a lazy and dishonest device than he.

Tennyson feels perhaps more sympathy with the gentle, attractive moods of nature than Browning does. Browning is largely preoccupied with the obscure workings of the soul, with the collisions between the wilfulness of the personality and the calm, onrushing sweep of the great moral laws ; Tennyson with the collisions between the individual will and the artificial laws

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of society. Browning deals with the elemental emotions; Tennyson with the secondary and modified emotions. Browning knew more of art and music than Tennyson. But this refers to the philosophical attitude of these two great artists. As a phrase-maker, Tennyson is very powerful. He has struck out in *In Memoriam* some great phrases, and if he sometimes falls below the dynamic phrase to the dexterous phrase, or even to the artificial phrase or verbal felicity, so does Shakespeare himself—from a higher elevation to a more commonplace level. *In Memoriam* is marked by weighty thought and weighty phrases. Among those that lodge in our memory is the personification of death, as :

“The Shadow cloaked from head to foot,  
Who keeps the keys of all the creeds.”

And the characterization of Hallam as a

“*High nature, amorous of the good,*  
But touched with no ascetic gloom,  
*And passion pure in snowy bloom*  
Through all the years of April blood.”

And the stanza :

“A love of freedom rarely felt—  
Of freedom in her regal seat—  
Of England, *not the schoolboy heat*  
*And blind hysterics of the Celt.*”

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Again he writes :

" And thus he bore without abuse  
    *The grand old name of gentleman,*  
Defamed by every charlatan,  
And soiled with all ignoble use."

The strophe which embodies the main ideas of evolution ends :

    " Arise, and fly  
    The reeling Faun, the sensual feast ;  
    Move upward, working out the beast,  
    *And let the ape and tiger die."*

At the close, after time had lessened the sharpness of grief, he speaks of himself as one in whom

    " And yet is love not less, but more ;

    " No longer caring to embalm  
    In dying songs a dead regret,  
    *But, like a statue, solid-set,*  
    *And moulded in colossal calm.*

    " Regret is dead, but love is more  
    Than in the summers that have flown,  
    For I myself *with these have grown*  
    *To something greater than before ;*

    " Which makes appear the songs I made  
    As echoes out of weaker times,  
    As half but *idle, brawling rhymes,*  
    *The sport of random sun and shade."*

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In fact, *In Memoriam* puts into powerful and melodious phrases the thought of the man educated in the Christian faith. The thought is common to all of us, but the phrasing gives it reach and force, so that the poem, by reason of its art, will probably take the highest rank among the contributions of the nineteenth century to permanent literature.

Tennyson's phrases in his lyrics are often wonderfully melodious and often very ingenious, but seldom have the vigorous quality of the great phrase. They have finish and elegance, but lack fire and heat. Carlyle's are just the opposite. They are rough-hewn, and have the sameness of chips of granite struck off by powerful blows. Carlyle's intensity and savage robustness of mind give his phrases a unique power in his more elevated passages. They are like the clang of a rough-toned trumpet, and could come only from a member of a race that finds music in the bagpipe. Tennyson's phrasing makes his blank-verse the most melodious ever written, though it lacks the varied harmonies that give such charm to Shakespeare's. It does not glow with the thought as his does, nor can it reach the harmony that the combination of phrase and line gives to Shakespeare and Milton, and (sometimes) to Browning. We are conscious of a sameness of movement in this from *Ænone*—

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"For now the noonday quiet holds the hill:  
The grasshopper is silent in the grass:  
The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,  
Rests like a shadow, and the cicala sleeps.  
The purple flowers droop: the golden bee  
Is lily-cradled: I alone awake.  
My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love—  
My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,  
And I am all aweary of my life."

This is certainly very beautiful blank-verse, but characterized by melody rather than by vigor, and destitute of the strong phrases which stand out and break the monotony of the line.

*Morte d'Arthur* has a grand, martial movement, but in this, too, there is a mechanical note, and the phrasing lacks the vigorous variety of nature.

In the *Idyls of the King*, too, the phrasing seems labored. Consider this from *Enid*:

"And bared the knotted column of his throat,  
The massive square of his heroic breast,  
And arms on which the standing muscle sloped,  
As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone,  
Running too vehemently to break upon it."

That is certainly not struck out at a heat, nor compacted by the fusing power of imagination. It is conscious art and laborious phrasing.

In *Tears, Idle Tears*, Tennyson has written a piece of blank-verse, perfect in every respect. It

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is more properly entitled "The days that are no more."

"Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean:  
Tears from the depth of some divine despair,  
Rise in the heart and gather to the eyes,  
In looking on the happy Autumn fields,  
And thinking of the days that are no more.

"Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail  
That brings our friends up from the underworld:  
Sad as the last which reddens over one  
That sinks with all we love below the verge,  
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

"Ah! sad and strange as in dark summer dawns,  
The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds  
To dying ears when unto dying eyes  
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square,  
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

"Dear as remembered kisses after death,  
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned  
On lips that are for others: deep as love,  
Deep as first love and wild with all regret.  
O death in life: the days that are no more."

This is so melodious a piece of verse that no one would notice that it is not rhymed. It is an illustration of musical phrasing rather than of powerful phrasing. It is a perfect piece of art with a certain sentimental and feminine quality

which we do not find in the rugged and virile Browning.

Literature differs from the other arts in that every composition, whether song, narrative, argument, or description, must have at the bottom an intelligible and consecutive line of thought. It may be very difficult, perhaps impossible, to state in other language what the thought is, and it may seem not always the same, but the definite thought must be there. Music, appealing solely to the emotions, is underlaid by an indefinite sentiment, but literature speaks primarily to the intellect and to the emotions as the intellect bids them arouse. Painting sometimes tells a story quite plainly, but colors, which bear the same relation to painting that phrases do to literature, possess some of the indefinable power of arousing emotion that musical notes have. By their gradations and contrast and in themselves they are beautiful although they represent nothing definite. There is reason in the theory which declares that painting is strictly decorative, because a painting is beautiful when it is decorative and nothing more. But the literary art differs from painting, for a collocation of lovely phrases, however musical or striking, do not compose except on a base of interwoven ideas. A poem which is all sweetness is detestable, and a composition of any kind which consists of fine phrases with no intellectual coherence is hardly less so. The

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phrase is a beautiful combination *per se*, but it is entirely subordinate to the unity of the entire composition which rests upon what Rossetti called "fundamental brain-work."

Phrases are the molecules of literature as words are its atoms, and it is but some slight difference of molecular arrangement that makes the difference between champagne and cider. We moderns have a method of imitating a sparkling wine by forcing gas into cider. This may do for "public palates which public dinners breed," but the wise guest drinks no more than politeness compels, and reflects that when the temperance is wisdom abstinence may be a virtue. Our modern literature is marked by the labored phrase, the artificial phrase, the phrase for the phrases' sake. The great phrase which is struck out from the excitement of a passionate heart laboring for expression is never heard. It would not be understood if it were. Probably the day for it and for the epic has passed. Read five hundred modern sonnets; you will hardly find one strong quotable phrase that has vigor enough to live forever in men's memories, but possibly one hundred that fit neatly into the line and have a melodious cadence. Posing, or the conscious assumption of an attitude before the public, has always been the vice of literature. Let us be thankful that in our time the pose is a decent one, with the hand on the place where the heart

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is supposed to be, with a decorous bend towards virtue, and a patronizing regard towards the great masters of the past who are beyond praise or blame. There are literary poses quite as affected as this and far more objectionable.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE DESCRIPTIVE POWER

THE descriptive power may be defined, broadly, as the ability to call up in the mind of the reader definite visual images of concrete objects—a landscape, a crowded street, an individual, or a room with its furniture and occupants. This effect depends not only on the words as symbols of things—if it depended on that only an inventory would be sufficient—but the words as sounds have power to call up images associated with the image called up by the word itself. The words as units of musical force reinforce the words as units of intellectual communication. We hear these sounds, although we do not speak the words aloud. Thus the descriptive power is moulded with the musical power, and it is rarely that we find a passage of description in which rhythm is not an element. If we consider for a moment the line in Catullus,

“*Ut flos in septis secretus nascitur hortis,*”

we find that it calls up a picture of a small, perfectly formed flower, not brilliant in color, grow

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ing in a corner made by a hedge or wall, in still air. If we disarrange the words so as to break the rhythm, writing them, for instance,

“Ut secretus flos nascitur in septis hortis,”

or if we translate them literally,

“As a hidden flower grows in an enclosed garden,”

the mental image becomes much less vivid. We see another flower in a different kind of garden, and we see it much less distinctly. The movement of the beautiful hexameter undoubtedly adds to and colors the descriptive power of the words. The musical power is moulded into and blends with the descriptive power of the artist. This interfusing of the two powers will become still more evident from a consideration of the entire poem.

Again, the phrasal power, or that which enables the artist to combine words into a whole greater than the elements, or words, of which it is made, joins with the descriptive power; in fact, phrases are the elements of description quite as much as words. King Henry, in apostrophizing sleep, says:

“O gentle sleep!

Wilt thou, upon the high and giddy mast,  
Seal up the ship-boy's eyes and rock his brains  
In cradle of the *rude, imperious surge*?”

The last phrase is wonderfully descriptive in itself, although the passage is reflective. The phrasal power, which we have made the subject of another paper, furnishes raw material to the descriptive power, and the musical power heightens and gives color to the description as a whole.

In modern times the power of rhythm to color description is rarely used in prose. The age is impatient of affectation, and it is so easy to fall into an artificial rhythm in prose that description is limited to clear, succinct statement and definite modification. We find nothing like the rhythms of Ruskin, or even of Macaulay, or, still lower, of Dickens, in modern writing. Great care is taken to seize the characteristic salient points of things and to enumerate minutiae, so as to make a harmonious whole, both of which are important artistic requirements; but word-painting, as it is called, is not in vogue, partly because it is so difficult to do it well and partly because when not done well it becomes ridiculous—and ridicule is the one thing the modern writer has not the courage to meet—and partly because so much attention is paid nowadays to hunting the phrase that the writer has little artistic energy left to form in his mind a luminous image of an object and make a presentation of it in words. But modern description gains in truth, or rather in accuracy, what it loses in vividness. It is scarcely possible to gain a clear idea of a London street or of a Lon-

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don interior from the literature of the tenth century, but our descendants would find little trouble in doing as much for the London of to-day, even if all pictorial illustration were lost. It is very difficult, too, to form a clear image of the outward appearance of the early settlements in this country, and comparatively easy to do as much for a modern mining camp of which we have never seen a counterpart. If the art of description has lost some of its imaginative insight in our day, the loss is partly compensated by a gain in definite, concrete representation.

It must not be believed that description is a matter of enumeration of particulars merely. The number of square feet in a room or the accurate dimensions of an architect are not elements that affect the imagination. Description must not be mechanical. It must be colored by individuality. One man sees things in one way, another man in another. We want the thing put before us as the artist sees it ; consequently, descriptions equally true may be very different, for the significance of things is many sided ; beauty, especially, is inexhaustible in its aspects. Shelley, for instance, saw everything through an emotional medium and as related to pain or death ; yet his skylark is a real bird, though he says nothing about its spotted breast or the length of its wings. The images he creates are enveloped in a mist quite different from the haze that lies

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on Tennyson's pictures, or the clear atmosphere in which we see the bank of daffodils described by Wordsworth. Yet all are equally true presentations of nature as related to the soul of man.

A distinction might be made between the descriptive phrase and the descriptive passage. A descriptive phrase is a touch, and its consideration rightly belongs to the chapter on the phrasal power. The descriptive passage is a picture made up of many touches. The descriptive phrase depends largely on the adjective and on the adverb—on the primary modifications—the descriptive passage on the grouping of many phrases modifying each other. Thus in Matthew Arnold's line alluding to Oxford,

“And the *sweet* city and her *dreaming* spires,”

or Milton's,

“While the *still* moon went out with sandals *gray*,”

or his allusion to the fortress of St. Michael,

“Where the *great vision* of the *guarded mount*  
Looks towards Namancos and Bayona's hold,”

the adjectives are plainly the essence of the descriptive power of the phrase, unless in the last we should give the most credit to the majestic rhythm. The most powerful descriptive passage

of modern times is Froude's narrative of the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. Dickens's description of the storm in which Steerforth and Ham Peggotty lost their lives is another celebrated example. It would be instructive to examine the different relations of writers to their subject-matter, as shown, for instance, by a comparison of the description of Dover Cliff in *Lear* and of Congreve's description of a cathedral in the *Mourning Bride*, which are illustrative of the changed attitude of men to the external world in successive centuries.

As a further illustration of the effect of musical arrangement in description, consider the catalogue of the ships in the first book of the *Iliad*. When translated by Pope, this list is as far removed from poetry as words can be, except in a mathematical demonstration—

"The hardy warriors whom Bœotia bred,  
Penelius, Leitus, Prothoenor led.  
With these Arcesilaus and Clonius stand  
Equal in arms and equal in command.  
These head the troops that rocky Aulis yields,  
And Eteon's hills and Hyrie's watery fields;  
And Schoenos, Scholos, Graea, near the main,  
And Mycalessia's ample piny plain.  
Those who in Peteon or Ilesion dwell,  
Or Harma where Apollo's prophet fell.  
Heleon and Hylè, which the springs o'erflow,  
And Medeon lofty and Ocalea low."

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This is certainly "skimble-skamble stuff," and is little better in blank-verse. It is a mere enumeration. In the original Greek the sounds of the words call up pictures of the heroic world—they are descriptive. In the English they are absolutely worthless. The words as symbols are ineffective, colorless—merely a list of dead names. When Milton has an occasion to set down a list of names, he weaves them into verse. The names become living and call up images, even if we know little of the persons or places enumerated. Compare, for instance, the enumeration of the Eastern cities shown to our Lord by the Tempter, *Paradise Regained*, Book III.:

"Here thou behold'st  
Assyria, and her empire's ancient bounds,  
Araxes and the Caspian Lake; thence on  
As far as Indus east, Euphrates west,  
And oft beyond: to south the Persian Bay,  
And, inaccessible, the Arabian drought:  
Here Nineveh, of length within her wall  
Several days' journey, built by Ninus old;  
Of that first golden monarchy the seat,  
And seat of Salmanassar, whose success  
Israel in long captivity, still mourns;  
There Babylon, the wonder of all tongues,  
As ancient, but rebuilt by him who twice  
Judah and all thy father David's house  
Led captive, and Jerusalem laid waste,  
Till Cyrus set them free; Persepolis,  
His city, there thou seest, and Bactra, there;

Ecbatana her structure vast there shows,  
And Hecatompylos her hundred gates;  
There Susa, by Choaspes, amber stream,  
The drink of none but Kings."

Milton gives his catalogue the effect of a panorama, showing that an illusion may be produced by the rhythmical arrangement of names, even when very few descriptive touches are added. Life is given to the merest skeleton. The words as symbols receive added efficiency from the words as sounds, and call up not merely vague notions of some forgotten city but a picture of the mysterious oriental civilization with its vast cities, its swarming populations, its wealth and cruelty. The names of the cities fall upon the ear so as to have a cumulative effect, whereas in Pope's translation of Homer each one obliterates the impression made by the preceding one. At the same time the strictly descriptive matter in the passage from Milton is very slight. The antiquity and magnitude of Nineveh and Babylon are suggested, but nothing is clearly brought before the reader's mind. It is an effective passage from the skilful use of names, and its power lies in the sonorousness of the names as much as in the associations with them.

Therefore, we cannot make a classification of poets as those who sing a song and those who paint a picture, for the song paints a picture and

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the picture is in song-like form. But we can distinguish those whose primary impulse is to sing a song from those whose primary impulse is to paint a picture, those with whom the expression of emotion seeks a rhythmical form, and those before whose minds the manifold aspects of the external world form a succession of images they are impelled to place before others in the medium of words. At the same time the rhythmical and metrical medium which both use has *per se* a picturesque, moulding power. And, again, the emotional self-disclosure of the lyric throws a light on external surroundings in which they are revealed with startling distinctness. When Burns is writing *Auld Lang Syne* he is impelled to sing a song. He is under the dominion of feeling, feeling so human that every one who reads sympathizes. But the line,

“We twa hae paid’t i’ the burn,”

brings up an image as clear as that produced by Whittier’s poem, the *Barefoot Boy*. Nevertheless, we can easily distinguish one as an emotional lyric, and the other as a descriptive poem. Verse is the voice of passion as well as of contemplative calm, but the line in which the heartbeat is heard is the higher form of art, because feeling is a primal force, and intellect is receptive, and has only a moulding, not an originating power.

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But when the intellect responds to the emotions of sympathy with the external world, and is not violently stirred by wonder, fear, love, or scorn, the result is descriptive passages reflecting the images mirrored in the soul. But some natures cannot contemplate external nature without overmastering emotion. They can hardly be said to contemplate or describe. Their sensitive souls infuse the element of personality into every utterance. They give out a part of themselves. Shelley is one of these, and a representative eighteenth-century poet—say Thompson or Crabbe—is at the other extreme. Between the poets in whom a sensitive personality predominates and those in whom an intellectual personality predominates are ranged the members of the entire band. We have to do with the presentation of nature by all of these. Shelley writes :

“Oh wild west wind, thou breath of Autumn's being!  
Thou from whose unseen presence the leaves dead  
Are driven, like ghosts, from an enchanter fleeing,  
Yellow and black and pale and hectic red,  
Pestilence-stricken multitudes” . . .

He brings before our minds with great distinctness the hurrying, dry leaves drifting before the wind, but his sense of a living power animating nature is so keen that he at once personifies it and them. His description is colored by feeling

for the mystery of force. Emotion takes possession of him just as it does in *Adonais* when he describes Rome :

“Rome, at once the Paradise,  
The grave, the city, and the wilderness”—

“ . . . Ages, empires, and religions there  
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought.”

He does not see the place at all. He is taken up by the feelings that the history and greatness of Rome evoke. This poem of *Adonais* is so surcharged with emotion that it causes us to doubt if Shelley could have been a long-lived man had he escaped the violent death he was soon to meet.

In his *Hymn to the Night*, he addresses a Vision. He makes no attempt at definite description :

“Swiftly walk over the western wave,  
Spirit of Night!  
Out of the misty eastern cave,  
Where all the long and lone daylight  
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,  
Which make thee terrible and dear,—  
Swift be thy flight!  
Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,  
Star-inwrought” . . .

This is pure lyricism, emotion projecting itself in vague forms like the frost on the glass, and possessing from its very uncertainty of outline the

power of suggesting pictures beyond the reach of art.

This allusive and indirect manner of description is peculiar to Shelley. It has great charm to the imaginative reader. The pictures are like those in a magic mirror; they are created by the observer, but the mirror suggests them to one person. The next may see nothing but cloudy depths, and a magician must hold up the mirror or the most piercing eye may see nothing.

As a rule, poets see their creations more distinctly or at least they describe them more definitely than Shelley does. Milton's Satan looms large and vague, but his spear is like the tall mainmast of a ship, his shield is like the moon as Galileo saw it through his telescope :

“His ponderous shield,  
Ethereal temper, massy, large and round,  
Behind him cast, the broad circumference  
Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb  
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views  
At evening from the top of Fesolé,  
Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,  
Rivers or mountains in her spotty globe.”

“His spear, to equal which the tallest pine,  
Hewn in Norwegian hills, to be the mast  
Of some great admiral, were but a wand.”

This is the usual method of Milton. His description gives an impression of qualities, usually:

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vastness and semi-obscurity, though not the indefiniteness of Shelley who describes shadows. Milton describes solid things in the shadow. The moon is not a measure of size. To some people it appears small, to others, large, though all know that it is large. The tall pine which Milton never had seen is also an indefinite measure of size. He tries to describe an imagined world not so much through the medium of this world which he has seen but through the medium of what he imagines things he has heard of or read about in this world to be. It might be said that this is the only way in which a blind man could describe objects, but Milton did not become blind before middle age. It is his natural method of description. Possibly he had looked at the moon through an "optic glass," but if he did, he saw it with his imagination. The Norwegian pine he never saw. It was to him something of unusual, striking, but indefinite height. Satan, he says, lay in the burning sulphur, "floating many a rood." He compares him to fabulous monsters, "Briareos" or "Typhon."

... "Or that sea beast  
Leviathan, which God, of all his works,  
Created hugest that swim the ocean stream,"

whom the mariner takes for an island and

"Moors by the side, under the lee."

He says that hell is

"A dungeon horrible on all sides round,  
As one great furnace flamed; yet from those flames  
No light, but rather darkness visible,"

and says that Vulcan, thrown from Heaven, fell

"From morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve,  
A summer's day, and with the setting sun,  
Dropt from the zenith like a falling star."

Satan's standard,

"full high advanced,  
Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind,  
With gems and golden lustre rich emblazed."

Again he describes Satan passing over chaos :

"Half on foot,  
Half flying . . .  
As when a gryphon through the wilderness,  
With winged course, o'er hill or moory dale,  
Pursues the Arimasbian, who, by stealth,  
Had from his wakeful custody purloined  
The guarded gold."

As a rule, this is the method of Milton's description. There is no concrete precision, but the striking feature is flashed on the mind by calling up an analogous feature of a phenomenon in no way resembling the one seen in his imagination. When he speaks of Satan "Squat like a



toad" at the ear of Eve, or compares the legions of fallen angels to a swarm of bees in the spring, he seems to be departing from his usual manner. As a rule, the scale on which he sees things is so large that he can furnish no actual unit of comparison, as the astronomers in enumerating the interstellar spaces must use the diameter of the earth's orbit for a measuring rod.

Dante's imagination was of a different quality. He saw his imagined world more clearly, and in describing it made use of actual things and places with definite dimensions and colors. The gate of hell, in *Paradise Lost*, is a vague, immense opening on

"A dark, illimitable ocean without bound,  
Without dimension, where length, breadth and height,  
And time and place are lost."

Dante comes to a door in the side of a mountain. He says :

"These words in obscure color I saw written  
Above a gate—Through me is the way into the doleful city,  
Through me the way among the lost people. Justice  
Moved my great maker. Divine power made me,  
Wisdom  
Supreme and Primal Love. Before me were no  
things created  
But the eternal things, and I endure eternal.  
Leave all hope behind, ye who enter here."

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The monster Geryon comes swimming upward  
out of the abyss,

"Like as he returns who sometimes goes down to loosen  
the anchor which grapples a rock or other thing that is  
hid in the sea, who spreads his arms and draws up his  
feet."

He sees the Simoniacs

"Head downwards in holes made in hot stone all of one  
size, about as large as the fonts in San Giovanni, a lam-  
bent flame on the soles of their feet; and as the flame  
of things oiled moves only on the outer surface, so it was  
there from the heels to the toes."

In the Malebolge, where the office-brokers and  
the public speculators are plunged in boiling pitch,  
he found it "marvellous dark," and compares it  
to the ship-yard in Venice, and says :

"As in winter, when they cannot navigate, the Vene-  
tians boil the clammy pitch to caulk their damaged  
ships . . . so not by fire but by art divine a dense pitch  
boiled down there and made the banks sticky. It I saw,  
but saw naught therein except the bubbles which the  
boiling raised and the whole swell and subside com-  
pressed. . . . And as dolphins when they plunge with  
arched back, so now and then some sinner showed his  
back above the surface and hid in less time than light-  
ning lasts. And as at the edge of the water of a ditch  
the frogs stand with only their noses out, and so conceal  
their bodies, thus stood on every hand the sinners; but  
as the demon approached they withdrew beneath the

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boiling pitch. I saw, and my heart still shudders there—at, one linger—as it will happen that one frog remains where the others disappeared—and the demon who was nearest to him hitched his hook into his pitchy hair and hauled him up, so that to me he seemed an otter.”

In the ninth circle he finds the schismatics and those who fomented civil strife :

“I saw, and still seem to see, a trunk going without a head, as the others of that dismal herd were going ; and it was holding the severed head by the hair, swinging like a lantern in its hand.”

Among the people who are described by this realistic imagery, he meets not only historic personages—Dido, Achilles, and Mahomet—but his own contemporaries, persons as well known to the public of his day as Benedict Arnold or Edgar A. Poe are to us. We can understand the interest his verse aroused among a people whose genius to look on things closely originated the art of painting, which depends on accurate, concrete observation. The bald translation I have used illustrates the descriptive quality of his words, because the musical element is eliminated, and the marked contrast between Milton and Dante shows how description is an outcome of imaginative constitution and an intimate part of style. Of the two methods the Miltonic—grandiose, vague, and illusive—seems to lack the power of the Dan-

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tesque—precise, sharp-cut, and making almost the effect of a visual image. One method is more germane to the Northern imagination, the other to the Southern.

Descriptions of this world of ours vary as much in artistic character as do the sustained attempts to embody an imaged world of disembodied spirits. We are not machines, photographing the world. We see things through the medium of our individuality. Light passes through an atmosphere, which gives it a character and causes the landscape to appear entirely different at different times. So a description is an attempt to embody things seen through the atmosphere which surrounds a human soul. Wordsworth's tree is not the lumberman's tree. The rock that Wordsworth saw in his youth was the same that he saw when an old man, but it appeared new and strange. And besides the difference of medium through which different people see things, there is a physical difference. Some persons see color when others see only light and shade. How do we know that red looks the same to one that it does to another? We can readily see that descriptions are infinite in variety, even though all are true in spirit and detail, because nature is a "book of infinite secrecy."

Viewing nature through the dominant mood is called by Ruskin the pathetic fallacy—that is, we fallaciously attribute to nature a harmony with

our feelings. She looks bright and joyful in the morning light, and hints of the everlasting and the infinite at night. To the man whose thoughts dwell on the unending flow of time and the ceaseless lapses of all things into the past, nature seems but a scaffolding built by time for the display of a brief drama. To Poe the earth is a tomb; to Scott, a stage, over which move the processions of humanity in historic pageants. To others it is an organism full of latent powers which take shape—as sorrow, disease, and death; and to others a playground or a picture-gallery. That description must depend largely upon the aspect under which we habitually see the earth is evident. Hawthorne's earth is quiet and sombre, but continually giving out hints of an underworld of quaint and mocking intelligence. It is nothing if not suggestive. In the story of *Ethan Brand*, the fire in the lime-burner's furnace in the forest is made to seem the life in the wicked heart of a man, and its extinction, death. After the vulgar revellers, who bring with them a hint of diabolic forces in the person of the showman, have gone, leaving Brand, Bartram, and the boy, Hawthorne says :

- "Save for these three human beings the open space on the hillside was a solitude set in a vast g'loom of forest. Beyond that darksome verge the firelight glimmered on the stately trunks and almost black foliage of pines, intermixed with the lighter verdure of sapling oaks, maples
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and poplars, while here and there lay the gigantic corpses of dead trees decaying on the leaf-strewn soil. And it seemed to little Joe, a timorous and imaginative child, that the silent forest was holding its breath until some fearful thing should happen."

Next morning Brand is dead and the departure of his desperate and tormented soul leaves nature unoppressed:

"Bartram issued from the hut followed by little Joe, who kept fast hold of his father's hand. The early sunshine was already pouring its gold upon the mountain-tops, and, though the valleys were still in shadow, they smiled cheerfully in the promise of the bright day that was hastening onward. The village, completely shut in by hills, which swelled away gently about it, looked as if it had rested peacefully in the hollow of the great hand of Providence. Every dwelling was distinctly visible, the little spires of the two churches pointed upwards and caught a foreglimmering of the brightness from the sun-gilt skies upon their gilded weather-cocks. The tavern was astir and the figure of the old smoke-dried stage-agent, cigar in mouth, was seen beneath the stoop. Old Greylock was glorified with a golden cloud upon its head. Scattered over the hearts of the surrounding mountains there were heaps of heavy mist or cloud hovering in the gold radiance of the upper atmosphere. Stepping from one to another of the clouds that rested on the hills, and thence to the loftier brotherhood that sailed in air, it seemed almost as if a mortal man might ascend into the heavenly regions. Earth was so mingled with sky that it was a day-dream to look at it."

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Science views the mountains as hard, immovable masses, the clouds, as watery vapor, obscuring and refracting the light, both subject to unchanging law. If it "seemed as if a mortal might reach heaven" from their heights, such seeming is a delusion. The earth is absolutely devoid of any quality with which man's moral nature can sympathize. Consequently, such a description as Hawthorne's which assumes a response between the earth and man's emotional being is false. It might do in an age when men personified natural forces and believed that living things inhabited the trees, rocks, streams, and hills, but is untrue now when we know that things have no souls. But art consists in presenting things not as they are, but as they appear to an emotional nature endowed with the gift of embodying its impressions in a medium of communication. The question is open whether things do not appear more truly as they are to the artist than to the unemotional, scientific observer; but leaving that question on one side, it is the human being's report, not the notes of a scientific man, that we wish to hear. It is description colored by the literary art that interests us when we read Victor Hugo's account of Waterloo, or Zola's account of the battle of Sedan, or Hawthorne's notes on the custom-house at Salem, or the picture of a brick-maker's hovel and its inmates by Dickens, or of the Esmond House by Thackeray,

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or of old London by Lamb. We are human beings ourselves, and we wish to hear a human being tell us how the earth looks to him. He must tell us truly, and he must look at it with all his nature, not with his eyes merely. Our eyes are as good as his, but man does not see with his eyes alone. If he did there would be no art, and Kipling and Hardy and Stevenson would be no greater than the ordinary pen-photographers. Therefore this "pathetic fallacy," or looking at nature *sub specie humanitatis*, is a legitimate method.

Of course this method must present a consistent picture. The emotion which colors the picture must be genuine, sustained emotion. Of all lies there is none worse than literary affectation. A man should not talk of the "smiling plain" unless it really appears "smiling" to him, nor of the "frowning crag" unless by that adjective he tries honestly to express a genuine feeling. Mr. Ruskin points out an instance of the lack of simplicity which makes Pope appear so false to modern readers. Ulysses summons the shades from Tartarus, and the first who appears is the shade of Elpenor, whom he supposed alive and at some distance. Ulysses says, very naturally :

"Elpenor! How camest thou under the shadowy darkness,  
Hast thou come faster on foot than I in my black ships?"

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Which Pope travesties :

"O, say, what angry power Elpenor led  
To glide with shades and wander with the dead?  
How could thy soul, by realms and seas disjoined,  
Outfly the nimble sail and leave the lagging wind?"

Strictly speaking, there is no description here of living agents, yet the emotion which prompted the question of Ulysses—horrified astonishment—would never have suggested the use of such adjectives as "nimble" and "lagging." They harmonize with a feeling of contentment and indolence. "Nimble sail" is preposterous for any mood.

Applying to inanimate things any characteristic trait of living beings, or to animals human qualities, as if these sympathized with men, is called by Mr. Ruskin "the pathetic fallacy." "Nimble sail" and "lagging wind" are instances of this. When Coleridge speaks of

"The one red leaf, the last of its clan,  
That dances as often as dance it can"

on the top of the tree, he falls into this fallacy of attributing to the leaf feelings of restless animation, or, as Ruskin says, "he fancies a life in it and will which there are not." Again, in Kingsley's song, the lines,

"They rowed her in across the rolling foam,  
The cruel, crawling foam,"

embody the same "pathetic fallacy." "The foam is not cruel, neither does it crawl," says Mr. Ruskin. He declares that

"The state of mind which attributes to these the characteristics of a living creature is one in which reason is unhinged by grief. All violent feelings have the same effect. They produce in us a falseness in all our impressions of external things which I would generally characterize as the 'pathetic fallacy.'"

Now, when the characteristics are harmonious with the state of mind in which nature is observed, this fallacy is not displeasing, because nature is described as seen through the atmosphere which surrounds a human soul, and this is the very essence of artistic description. But the moment the characteristics attributed to nature are not such as the emotion grief, desperation, awe, joy, or whatever it may be, properly calls for, the description is untrue, weak, inartistic, displeasing. Therefore, the "cruel, crawling foam" is a good descriptive epithet, and the "nimble sail" and "lagging wind" are not descriptive at all.

Mr. Ruskin's own descriptions furnish excellent illustrations of the "pathetic fallacy," and perhaps that is one reason why they are so admirable. Ruskin says, describing one of Turner's pictures—"The Slave-ship":

"It is a sunset on the Atlantic after a prolonged storm; but the storm is partially lulled, and the torn

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and streaming rain-clouds are moving in scarlet lines to lose themselves in the hollows of the night. The whole surface of sea included in the picture is divided into two ridges of enormous swell, not high, not local, but a low, broad heaving of the whole ocean, like the lifting of its bosom by deep-drawn breath after the torture of the storm. Between these two ridges the fire of the sunset falls along the trough of the sea, dyeing it with an awful but glorious light, the intense and lurid splendor which burns like gold and bathes like blood. Along the fiery path and valley the tossing waves, by which the swell of the sea is restlessly divided, lift themselves in dark, indefinite, fantastic forms, each casting a faint and ghastly shadow behind it along the illuminated foam. They do not rise everywhere, but three or four together in wild groups, fretfully and furiously as the understrength of the swell compels or permits them, leaving between them treacherous spaces of level and whirling water, now lighted with green and lamplike fire, now flashing back the gold of the declining sun, now fearfully dyed from above with the indistinguishable images of the burning clouds, which fall upon them in flakes of crimson and scarlet and give to the reckless waves the added motion of their own fiery flying. Purple and blue the lurid shadows of the hollow breakers are cast upon the mist of the night, which gathers low and cold, advancing like the shadow of death upon the guilty ship as it labors amidst the lightning of the sea, its thin masts written upon the sky in lines of blood girded with condemnation in that fearful hue which signs the sky with horror and mixes its flaming flood with the sunset, and, cast far along the desolate heave of the sepulchral waves, incarnadines the multitudinous sea."

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That description is overloaded with adjectives and adverbs. It could at least well spare "guilty ship" and the other modifications in which the fact that it is a slave-ship, and that her human cargo has just been thrown into the ocean to avoid detection, is treated as sending a thrill of horror through the sky and sea. The "pathetic fallacy," or imputing to nature sympathy with the emotional mood through which it is seen, is a scientific fallacy, but a true artistic method. But to those who cannot help feeling—not seeing—in nature the manifestation of an inscrutable intelligence, it is not a fallacy at all. It forms a part of every impression they receive when the image of her fair and noble forms, the petal of the flower, the wind-swept plain, or the sleeping ocean is presented to consciousness.

It would be instructive to note the different kinds of this "pathetic fallacy." The ancients were less subject to it, for the moment they viewed nature emotionally they attributed the sympathy to a personal and local deity, and not to the universal. In the middle ages demons and gnomes and fairies took the place of Pan and the local deities as intermediate between man and nature. Wordsworth is a monotheist, and so is Shelley, but the tendency to interpose spiritual agencies between man and nature is still strong in both, although the emotional medium through which they see the world is so radically different

that it almost seems as if they described different worlds. How different again is Hawthorne's world from Stevenson's! But each description is made vivid and real by the emotional individuality of the writer. Without emotion the description makes no picture. But emotion must be true, natural, and sustained, or the picture is false, feeble, and inconsistent.

To show that the emotional medium is necessary to the construction of a description that shall present any living image, and that an inventory is ineffective, however accurate, consider Mr. Ruskin's description of the Rhone, at Geneva. It is as accurate as possible, but the pathetic fallacy being entirely suppressed no illusion is created.

"The sunlight falls from the cypresses of Rousseau's island straight towards the bridge. The shadows of the bridge and the trees fall on the water in leaden purple, opposed to its general hue of aquamarine green. This green color is caused by the light being reflected from the bottom, though the bottom is not seen, as is evident by its becoming paler towards the middle of the river, on which pale part the purple shadow of the small bridge falls most forcibly, which shadow is still, however, only apparent, being the absence of this reflected light associated with the increased reflective power of the water which in those spaces reflects blue sky above. A boat swings in the shoal water, its reflection is cast in a transparent pea-green, which is considerably darker than the

pale aquamarine of the surface at the spot. Its shadow is detached from it just about half the depth of the reflection, which therefore forms a bright green light between the keel of the boat and its shadow; where the shadow cuts the reflection, the reflection is darkest and something like the true color of the boat; where the shadow falls out of the reflection, it is of a leaden purple. The boat is at an angle of about  $20^{\circ}$  below. Another boat in deeper water shows no shadow, whatsoever, and the reflection is marked by its transparent green, while the surrounding water takes a lightish blue reflection from the sky."

The above is a realistic description, absolutely truthful, and giving as many of the manifold facts of nature as could be compressed into the words. There is no hint of any emotional bond between subject and object. The subjective, the personal, is entirely ignored. The scene is taken into the eye, not into the soul. Nothing more scientific can be found in the papers of the British Association. And in consequence the description is absolutely dead. It calls up no picture. It is powerless, like all description, all exposition, all argument from which the human element is excluded. One is almost tempted to utter the heresy, "better false emotion, better affected emotion than no emotion at all," except in arithmetic.

The pathetic fallacy, if a fallacy at all, is less forced when it appears in descriptions of an interior. A room or a house or even a city is the prod-

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uct of human hands, and is naturally characterized as bright or gloomy, cheerful or joyless and sordid. Such things reflect human character directly. The differences of the writer's stand-points, however, affect such descriptions no less than they affect descriptions of out-door nature. Dickens and Thackeray describe London streets so as to make an entirely different impression on their readers. One great element of power is keenness of observation. In this no one is superior to Dickens. He sees so many points at a glance that his descriptions are sometimes overloaded with minutiae. The next element of power is to seize the characteristic and salient points. This is the poet's way of seeing things, so that in the poet's description we recognize truth. He calls our attention to matters we have often looked at but never seen. We become so familiar with some things that we know little about them. When some one who has the gift of perceptive observation describes them to us our eyes are opened.

The human face and figure is so full of individuality, and the differences are so minute, yet so important, that it is a difficult subject of description. Usually the merest outlines are suggested and the impression of personal appearance is created by reference to the impression made on others. An enumeration of details is absolutely ineffective because there are too many to

enumerate and not words enough in the language to embody them. In *Daniel Deronda*, George Eliot manages to convey to her readers an impression of the beauty of Gwendolen Harleth, although when the girl is first brought on the scene little is said of her appearance. Shakespeare says little of the personal appearance of his characters. Probably he relied on the presence of the actor to create the image, but his descriptions of personal appearance are almost invariably of the indirect kind. Of the scene his descriptions are sometimes detailed, as the theatre was so poorly furnished that a poetic illusion must be created by words. But his powers were so fused in an artistic temperament, and so balanced, that it is impossible to analyze them. The Forest of Arden is made to appear the very essence of out-door nature, but we cannot say how it is done.

As a rule, there is more description by details in modern literature than in older. There is very little in the English ballad, with its conventional epithets and its intentness on the narrative. Our age scrutinizes things more closely and is more accurate in its records. There is a method of cataloguing details to be found exemplified in many of our modern magazines, very much used at present, and sometimes very effective on a low artistic plane. Bret Harte's California scenery and Miss Murfree's Tennessee mountains are



done in this way. Color is more observed and more minute differences of shade are particularized than was the fashion with our ancestors, who had not discovered twenty-four shades of red on a single maple leaf, and who would have been entirely in the dark as to what is meant by a "pungent red" or "gleams of piquant green in a tawny eye." It may be, however, that those phrases do not correspond to anything real, and are to the authors mere words. If so, they are dishonest.

Description, therefore, depends on two things—first, on the power of observation, the attentive glance, by which the eye notes a crowd of particulars and the mind is at once arrested by those which are vital to the whole, and rejects the accidental and non-coherent; second, on the vision which recalls this whole and sets it in clear light before the memory, from whence it may be transferred, illuminated, and nobly disclosed by "the light that never was on land or sea, the consecration and the poet's dream."

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## CHAPTER VIII

### THE EMOTIONAL POWER

EMOTIONAL intensity is not a literary power any more than philosophical mental constitution is. It is the motive force which sets powers and aptitudes at work, and gives them energy for accomplishment. In every-day life we see that an excess of capacity for feeling produces the fanatic, and its defect the temporizer. Combined with sanity of judgment it sometimes results in characters of high worth and effectiveness, warmed with the glow of a central fire and faithful to central convictions. When not thus balanced it usually prompts to rash utterance, to one-sided opinions, and to action based on the partial view of relative duties which emotion suggests. If combined with literary faculty, it gives to literary utterance a peculiar power which painstaking can never reach. Sometimes it gives the accent of seriousness, sometimes the accent of enthusiastic excitement, but always the accent of truth. We see that at the bottom the writer is in earnest, and at once feel respect, even if we disagree with

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him. If a writer would be interesting, he must himself take interest in his subject-matter; if a passionate interest, so much the better, for there is nothing so tedious as the indifferentism whose inmost belief is, "Oh, it doesn't much matter." Intense partisanship even on the wrong side, if it be honest, is preferable in a book to intellectual quiescence obtained by lack of sensitiveness. Imagination quickened by emotion is vivid; without some feeling, imagination is dreamy and indolent, and its tender and plaintive charm cannot arouse and incite as does a strong but regulated enthusiasm.

The emotion which pulsates in the verse of a poet must have a moral or an æsthetic base. If it is called out simply by keen perception of injury to the self, or keen sense of the enjoyment of life, as in some of Villon's *ballades*, it may give the verse vigor and picturesqueness, but it needs a broader, nobler feeling to give it power and reach. Embodied selfishness or egotism may be literary in the sense of being amusing, but it is not artistic in the sense of being elevating.

Moral emotion rests on our sense of the good, the right, the true. It may express itself in enthusiasm for what is noble, or, on the other hand, in indignation at cruelty, injustice, and stupidity, in which case it takes the form of satire, social or political. Again, it may be of the kind which is excited by concrete examples of suffering—to

this all humanity is by nature subject—or it may be of the kind to which universal principles appeal almost with the force of actualities, and this is the temper of the great priests and the great philanthropists, the men who live in the spirit.

Æsthetic emotion is excited by a perception of the loveliness and majesty of the world, and is based on an affinity in the soul for that quality or governing principle of the material universe which we call beauty. Its manifestations are so various that some of them appeal to the minds of one constitution and some of them to minds widely different. One poet is delicately sensitive to the charm of a quiet rural landscape, but is almost blind to human embodiments of the beautiful in painting or any other art, feeling only a vague respect for something he knows is great art but does not love. Coleridge and Shelley had no appreciation of music beyond the vague sense of melody common to all of us. The sensuous delight in beautiful things is quite distinct from enthusiastic regard and reverence for the principle, though either may be the inspiration of verse. And a minor distinction which characterizes literary treatment is that some persons are more sensitive to beauty of form and others to beauty of color. These various susceptibilities to embodiments of the beautiful are blended in so many different proportions that real poets are distinct and original in imaginative treatment

of the same subject-matter, but in all cases emotional intensity, though called into activity by different causes and the product of widely different temperaments, is one secret of power. In poetry a man must be an advocate, a passionate, earnest advocate. He must feel wonder and admiration. If he is judicial, unprejudiced, cosmopolitan, he may write instructive, scientific prose, possibly intellectual, finished verse, but not poetry. He will be a safe guide, but no one will follow him, because he makes no appeal. Certain singers have a vibrant, thrilling quality of voice, called sympathetic. This quality produces effects quite out of the reach of the power of perfect technique. In much the same way that which is written in excitement creates excitement. The warm, intense, earnest nature combined with strength and artistic self-restraint results in the poetic vision, which sees things in new relations and catches a glimpse of reality.

It must not be supposed that capacity for moral emotion and for æsthetic emotion are in any way incompatible; in fact, they are cognate, and in literary artists are usually conjoined. The Puritan ideal was as much distorted by divorcing enthusiasm for the good from enthusiasm for the concrete beautiful as by the one-sided character of its standard of right conduct. Certain aspects of the beauty embodied in things are closely allied to moral elevation, so that with no sense of incon-

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gruity we speak of moral beauty, and say of a character in which there is a balance of strength, rectitude, and unselfishness, that is "a beautiful character." The impression of repose, steadfastness, and superiority to change that is given by a mountain has a likeness to the impression we receive from a perception of the unchangeable, unconquerable nature of moral principle. Therefore a poet who, like Wordsworth, is emotionally excited by the idea of moral strength is likely to be stirred by the grand, calm, primitive face of nature in much the same way. Both are kindred to him. Byron deifies unchecked force in the mountain torrent and in the rebellious, self-sufficient will. It is true that nature is entirely un-ethical. The stars in their courses know no right nor wrong. The law of gravitation is mechanical, not moral. The tiger is neither just nor unjust, but it is almost impossible to divert our conceptions of nature's forces and nature's embodiments from the ideas of intelligence and intention which we attribute to a personality. The poet will therefore usually be found responsive to ethical emotion and to æsthetic emotion equally, and there will be a similarity between the exciting causes of his feeling in the realm of the moral and in the realm of the beautiful.

It must be remembered that the rule that enthusiasm for a certain aspect of the beautiful implies a kindred enthusiasm for the cognate aspect

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of the good is not absolute. Those whose admiration for technical skill has been exclusively cultivated sometimes forget the character of the matter which technical skill has put into artistic form. For them nature is interesting as something to be copied, and the little piece taken has a practical relation to the artist as material and no relation to the universal. The interesting thing to them is the way the work is done. The maxim, "Art for art's sake," implies that technical art is a sufficient basis for enthusiasm. The intellectual and emotional narrowing of the art impulse is not confined to modern France, although it is more germane to the French than to the English mind. It is not necessarily right because it is modern, for literature differs from mechanics in that the practice and theory of the past is in it of precisely as much value as that of the present, but in mechanics antiquated practice and theory are valueless. And the law that there is a subtle connection between æsthetic tone and ethical tone, if not absolute, is as well established as any law can be in the history of the endeavors of the human mind to express itself through art-forms. In art we have no right to regard the past as old-fashioned.

Shakespeare was capable of feeling and expressing almost all of the complex emotions to which the human heart is susceptible, although he reveals little or nothing of his personality. It

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is impossible to believe that he did not love Hamlet and hate Iago, or that he was not enthusiastic over Juliet or stirred to the very roots of his being by love and reverence for Imogen and Miranda. We can feel sure of one thing, that he felt a keen and passionate interest in human nature. When he talked with his friends he felt how they felt. When he read *Plutarch*, or some poem or story in which unreal figures grotesquely mimicked humanity, he at once filled it with men and women. This power comes from sympathy, from emotional ability to enter into the being of others, not from intellectual comprehension. The sympathetic capacity is receptive, the cold heart and active brain do not understand. In Shakespeare the power of divining by sympathy was united to the intellectual power of making a consistent synthesis of all the character elements perceived.

That Shakespeare ever felt personally any of the emotional suffering he has depicted does not at all follow. Certainly he never underwent the trials of Timon, or Lear, or Macbeth, though he may have felt as Hamlet felt. Personal experience is a great educator, but sympathy enables one to learn from the experience of others, or even from imagined experience. There is nothing to show that Shakespeare's life was not one of commonplace prosperity after he was twenty-seven, and of commonplace folly before he was twenty. We know little of his real life-experience.

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Some expressions in the *Sonnets* do seem to come from a heart wrung by a love, regret, shame and despair so passionate that it must have been personal. But we have no right to infer anything from poetry except poetic power even when the writer uses the first person. However, whether the *Sonnets* are autobiographic or not, they, in common with the plays, show that Shakespeare possessed a knowledge of the subtle and profound manifestations of emotional force in human characters which is perhaps more remarkable than any of his other powers. With the exception of religious ecstasy, a phase perhaps not practically suited to dramatic presentation, he has charted the depths and shallows and currents and storm-centres of the entire sea. The heart of young womanhood he read by profound sympathy. He makes no parade of his feelings, but it is impossible to believe that he did not love Miranda and Perdita with enthusiasm. The creation of such characters is not a matter of cool intelligence and technical skill alone. The thought of them stirs the hearts of men because it once stirred Shakespeare's.

John Milton, the next poet whom we shall consider, was of a temperament more susceptible to moral than to æsthetic enthusiasm, and education and force of circumstances developed in him an austere love for the ideal of righteousness at the expense of love for the beautiful dissociated from

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the moral. In his poems before the great Puritan triumph, especially in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, we see him lingering over the quiet charms of nature and art with the fondness of a lover. Nothing that made life in England full and rich and beautiful escapes him. He sees everything set in historic associations. With wonderful artistic self-restraint he discloses to us the cathedral:

"The storied windows richly dight,  
Casting a dim, religious light,"

and the loveliness of rural scenes, by a word or two which shows how he felt the essential charm and harmony of all, and he makes us feel what he felt. But as he grew older the stern lineaments of Justice and Duty grew more attractive to him, and personal delight in this beautiful world something of less moment. In *Lycidas* there is no expression of personal grief; perhaps there was no personal loss felt. At first the feeling is abstract, an expression of mourning for Edward King as a type of gracious promise lost, for which he feels the need of "some melodious tear." But when St. Peter appears among the speakers, and the contrast is drawn between what Edward King might have become and what some faithless and worldly priests were, as soon as Milton thinks of the traitors and cowards in the conflict between righteousness and unright-

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ousness, emotion takes possession of him, his wrath flames up, and he writes from his heart the passage in which every line is alive with indignation :

" How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,  
Enow of such as for their bellies' sake  
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold!  
Of other care they little reckoning make,  
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,  
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.  
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to  
hold

A sheep-hook, or have learned aught else, the least  
That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs!  
What recks it them? What need they? they are sped,  
And when they list, their lean and flashy songs  
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;  
The hungry sheep look up and are not fed,  
But swollen with wind and the rank mist they draw.  
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;  
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw  
Daily devours apace and nothing said:  
*But that two-handed engine at the door  
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."*

The emotion makes the image of the axe of the reformation seem as formidable as the flaming sword of the angel that guarded the gates of Paradise. As a rule, Milton's poetic temperament is equable and elevated. One of his sonnets :

"Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints whose bones  
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold,"

it is true, is alive with righteous indignation. Prose he probably did not regard as an artistic product; consequently, he is not restrained by his artistic sense. Magnificent passages abound in it, but his anger and contempt disfigure his pages with personalities and extravagance, even when he is writing Latin. Some allowance must be made for the controversial manners of the day, but it is evident that when a great artist descends to a personal invective, he attempts a task unworthy of him and fails of producing great literature, though anger lends force and point to his words. The object of his wrath is temporary, the inciting cause is an individual whose name represents nothing to us. If, on the contrary, his indignation is stirred by violation of a principle, our sympathy with his emotion is at once aroused, for the principle is immortal and possibly is an object of quite as much interest to us as it was to him. Controversial literature is apt to be taken up with trivial matters, except in the hands of a very great man like Webster, who, in his reply to Hayne, rises above the personalities of the hour. A man of the quick emotions of the poet can hardly do this unless his artistic sense of the dignity of verse restrains his expression.

Alexander Pope was a man of quick sensibility—prone to take offence, nervous, irritable, excitable—but neither his æsthetic nor his moral sensibility was of a high order. The phrasal power he possessed in perhaps as high a degree as any man who ever lived. He is alive to the beauty and fitness of language as an intellectual instrument. But, from the moral point of view, we cannot find that the bitterness of life oppressed his spirit nor that the beauty of righteousness enraptured it. Nor from the æsthetic point of view was he roused to ecstatic emotion either by the beauty of nature or the beauty of art. He lacked the emotional sensibility of the poet. But even in his case his verse is at its best when he is under the influence of strong feeling, even if it be only the petty spite which makes the *Dunciad* bitter with vigorous life. His jealousy of Addison is unworthy a man of letters, but it is the inspiration of the best verse he wrote. That celebrated passage has a glow worthy of a higher feeling. How great it would be were it the outpouring of noble emotion !

“Peace to all such, but were there one whose fires  
True genius kindles and fair fame inspires,  
Bless'd with each talent and each art to please,  
And born to write, converse, and live with ease.  
Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,  
Bear like the Turk no brother near the throne,

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View him with scornful yet with jealous eyes,  
And hate for arts that caused himself to rise  
Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,  
And without sneering teach the rest to sneer,  
Willing to wound and yet afraid to strike,  
Just hint a fault and hesitate dislike,  
Alike reserved to blame or to commend  
A timorous foe and a suspicious friend,  
Dreading e'en fools, by flatterers besieged,  
And so obliging that he ne'er obliged ;  
Like Cato give his little senate laws,  
And sit attentive to his own applause,  
While wits and Templars every sentence raise,  
And wonder with a foolish force of praise,  
Who but must laugh if such a man there be?  
Who would not weep if Atticus were he?"

These lines are characterized by force, vigor, and directness. But the animus is evident. They are directed against an individual. They have their source in egotism, the narrow egotism of selfishness, not the broad egotism of a nature excited by the thought of the noble, the universal, the divine. We cannot conceive of Shakespeare writing in such a vein, nor Wordsworth, nor Scott, nor Longfellow, nor Lowell, when "their singing robes were on." Byron might have done so, or Swinburne, but the higher natures when excited rise above the contemplation of the individual. When the artist is petty, "so much the less artist, he."

A more unselfish man than Shelley never lived, nor one whose feelings were more readily aroused. His emotional susceptibility is of entirely different order from Pope's. His indignation is roused by injustice to another. Not only is the thought of self entirely in the background, but the obnoxious individual against whom the invective is directed becomes lost in the abstraction which he represents. In the *Adonais* it is not Keats whom Shelley laments, but Poetry. It is not Gifford whom he lashes, but injustice, cruelty, stupidity. He grieves over the sorrow and pain of the world because a poet is dead, a poet who could have done something to alleviate the wretchedness and the brutality of men. The analogy between his own life and that of Keats stirs his soul. He mentions no names because he has no feeling for individuals, only for the eternal cause, the battle between the eagle and the serpent. His emotion is so intense that he is carried at once beyond the mundane into the realm of the everlasting powers. He invokes Urania, the goddess representing the divine principle of love, the elemental source :

"That Light whose smiles kindle the Universe,  
That beauty in which all things work and move."

It was to her that the wrong had been done in the death of one of the priests of the beau-

tiful, one of the rare souls, her messengers to earth :

"Thy youngest, dearest one has perished,  
The nursling of thy widowhood."

When she comes she cries :

"O, gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,  
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men,  
Too soon and with weak hands though mighty heart  
Dare the unpastured dragon in his den,  
Defenceless as thou wert? Oh! where was then  
Wisdom, the mirrored shield, or scorn, the spear?  
Or hadst thou waited the full cycle when  
Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere,  
The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like  
deer."

Again :

"The herded wolves, bold only to pursue,  
The obscene ravens, clamorous o'er the dead,  
The vultures, to the conqueror's banner true,  
Who feed when desolation first had fed,"

are to Shelley, not a particular set of living men, but rather the principles of stupidity, greed, and selfishness, which manifest themselves in society in continual conflict with righteousness, love, and spiritual illumination. He refers to Gifford, whose review he believed—perhaps erroneously, for Keats was too much of a man to be deeply hurt

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by the mistakes of the unintelligent—to have hastened the death of the young poet, but once, and then with contempt rather than anger :

“Live thou whose infamy is not thy fame,  
Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me  
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name!  
But be thyself, and know thyself to be,  
And ever at thy season be thou free  
To spill thy venom when thy fangs o’erflow,  
Remorse and self-contempt shall cling to thee,  
Hot shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,  
And like a beaten hound, tremble thou shalt, as now.”

This poem derives its greatness from the elevation of the sentiment, from the fact that the appeal is to the universal, not to the personal ; its power it derives from the intensity of the writer's feeling. He could not have been more in earnest—more thrilled in every fibre of his being—had he seen the embodiments of the spiritual forces face to face. The musical lines, the beautiful phrases, may appeal to our sense of the beautiful in form, but the passion they unfold, to which they are secondary, appeals to our sense of the beautiful in essence. Emotional excitement roused by the perception of ethical law, by contact with the universal, makes the *Book of Job* a revelation. Through the same cause, Shelley rose in spirit to the poetic vision, a height at-

tained by few poets, though it is only as they strive to reach it that any deserve the name.

The highest and noblest poetic mood is that induced by contemplation of the broad reaches of the universal. But the hardly inferior is the fine frenzy in the soul of the poet aroused by the embodied beautiful in nature or in art. He feels the joy of life in this concrete world, in which the universal is manifested, or he is roused to delighted sympathy with the creative instinct of humanity by the sight of things in which men have labored to embody sentiments kindred to his own. Of the poets of the first class Burns and Wordsworth may be taken as examples, and of the second, Rossetti. In no two men is this mood identical, since emotional responsiveness is an intimate quality of the personality. A broad division might be made into men who delight chiefly in beauty of form and those who delight chiefly in beauty of color, but this must be for the present neglected. Let us consider for a moment the emotional quality of the poet Burns, of whom Carlyle says :

“He is tender and he is vehement, yet without constraint or too visible effort; he melts the heart or inflames it with a power which seems habitual and familiar to him. We see in him the gentleness, the trembling pity of a woman, with the deep earnestness, the force, and passionate ardor of a hero. Tears lie in him and consuming fire. He has a resonance in his bosom for every note of human feeling.”

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This is too much to say of Burns. In fact, Shakespeare is the only man of whom it can be said. Burns was a song-writer, and hearty sympathy with the ordinary range of human sympathies is necessary to the popular song-writer, and intense interest in the obscure problems of human nature would be harmful to him. Burns was a man of quick, passionate sympathies. Scott says :

"There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large and of a dark cast which glowed—I say literally *glowed*—when he spoke with feeling or interest."

But we do not need this testimony nor the statement that he shed tears over a print representing a soldier's widow and orphan, for his sensibility is evident in every line of his verse. It is called out by the weak, the helpless, the oppressed. It is personal, and for something before his eyes. It does not go back to the principle, but is confined to the embodiment. The eternal conflict between the eagle and the serpent he does not see. The suffering of the individual wrings Shelley's heart, but he sees in it a violation of the cosmic order. It brings tears to Burns's eyes, but he does not look beyond the victim and the oppressor into those deeper moral harmonies which are the laws of the great poet's

soul. Burns was a poet, a true poet, by virtue of his musical sense, his phrasal power, and his quick sympathies. But the sympathies of the great poet are more universal than his were, his feelings are aroused by a deeper insight into the realities of the world. Burns's cry of defiance against the inequalities of society is toned by personal animosity. His democracy is animated rather by a jealousy of existing aristocracy than by a perception of the worth of the individual soul. It is equality in external conditions, not equality before the moral law, that is his ideal in *A Man's a Man for a' that*. The true poetic intensity of feeling is that which accompanies insight, not the heat kindled by some visible, tangible matter brought before the senses. The central fire is the illuminated imagination to which the violation of abstract justice and honor is a vital matter.

Burns illustrates the principle that the poet is not among the greatest if he simply feels keenly and expresses his feelings melodiously, but he must be responsive to an instinctive honor for the abstract moral order. He illustrates, too, the principle that the popular poet must feel keenly and readily all the ordinary emotions and sympathize with the joys and griefs of his fellow-men before his eyes to the exclusion of the broader metaphysical anger or ecstasy. Possibly this is the temper of the true lyric poet who, in-

terpreting the surface of things, pours out his emotion in a bird-like burst of song, and passes quickly from some phase of tenderness to indignation, from some phase of joy to despair, induced by the changing aspects of the external world.

In sympathy with humble things—with the mountain daisy or the field-mouse—in indignation against common, mean hypocrisy and deceit, no one was readier than Robert Burns. His poems exactly express the feeling that prompted them, and therefore are perfect. Admirable as was his wit, his best poems are those in which he expresses emotion, even though it be but pity for himself. Patriotism, love for Scotland, was the highest, most unselfish feeling he experienced, and *Scots wha hae wi' Wallace Bled* is his greatest song. His emotion is genuine as far as it goes, and in consequence he is never affected. His remorse is not profound, his ecstasy is not divine, but such as they were they were not simulated, they were felt for the moment, they were real while they lasted, and, in consequence, his verse appeals to as large a number of men as that of any poet who ever lived, and will continue to do so until the dialect in which it is written is forgotten. The epitaph he wrote for himself expresses his character truly :

“The poor inhabitant below  
Was quick to learn and wise to know,  
And keenly felt the friendly glow

And softer flame,  
But thoughtless follies laid him low,  
And stained his name."

Had his nature been capable of a wider range of emotion, the "thoughtless follies" would have been powerless. His ideal world was not quite real enough to him. Shakespeare might complain that "fortune was the guilty goddess of his harmful deeds," and that "his nature was *almost* subdued to what it works in, like the dyer's hand." But his nature was not entirely subdued. On the contrary, it was victorious, for his ideal world was real and permanent to him, we cannot doubt, and his emotion was not a fitful flash but a steady flame, lighting up the dark places of life and guiding him past the cruel rocks and through the cross-currents.

Another Scotchman, Thomas Carlyle, a greater man than Robert Burns, illustrates the lack of broad sympathies. But the incompleteness of Carlyle is entirely different from the incompleteness of Burns. He lacked the sympathy of love, the enthusiasm for humanity which causes the artist to yearn over men as if they were the brothers of his infancy, which regards selfishness and stupidity as misfortunes, not crimes; as deficiencies, not active principles. This is the tone of mind which has infinite tolerance and infinite patience with the world. This tone of mind is rare be-

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cause it is Christ-like. It is not incompatible with indignation, but anger at the offender is tempered with sorrow, a radical difference is felt between the sinner and the sin. This elevated tone of mind is perhaps beyond humanity, but by as much as the poet approaches it by so much he becomes the truer poet. His powers as an artist are vivified by purpose and insight. Carlyle, too, is a poet, though he wrote no verse. He looked at the world *sub specie aeternitatis*. His ethical enthusiasm is a powerful governing impulse. In his conception the principle of good is a stern, unwearied angel. Righteousness is so strong that what is not strong is not righteous. Carlyle's identification of will-power with moral elevation is a serious philosophical error. It is as if one should make formal beauty to lie exclusively in bone and muscle. In consequence, his emotional fervor fails to call up the response it would if its objects were less narrow. His indignation and his admiration have a taint of unreality, and yet probably there was never a more sincere man than Thomas Carlyle. His emotional nature was strong but limited. It is something to reverence "the immensities and the eternities," but a man who at the same time believes that the "Island of Great Britain is inhabited by twenty-three millions of people, mostly fools," fails to appreciate the conditions under which the immensities and the eternities work in human

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life. The intensity of this great man makes his work literature. We can see here is a soul on fire; but it is the incompleteness of his emotional nature, not the deficiencies of his method, that cause him to fall below the greatest. The truly divine emotion is love, and with it come all the others: reverence, pity, indignation, unselfishness, enthusiasm for humanity, long-suffering. The recognition of this fundamental proposition makes Christianity the most permanent of religions, and enables it to resist the encroachments which the ambitions and vainglory of men continually make upon its development. It has a central positiveness, so that even a great protestant like Carlyle, whose thought is simply negative, has a purifying influence, whereas in the ancient world he would have been destructive.

Artists feel a joy in beauty of form closely allied to the joy of spiritual beauty which is their birthright. That beauty of form may grow to be the standard and criterion of excellence is evident in certain ages and in certain individuals. Art becomes a thing apart, not so much the interpreter to humanity as the goddess of a coterie of illuminati. A feeling of personal superiority, a sense of belonging to the æsthetic aristocracy is created. Perfection of workmanship rather than broad significance of thought is aimed at, and something that can be understood only by

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the inner brotherhood is of higher value than something universally valid and comprehensible. This narrowing of the sympathies frequently increases the intensity of feeling by restricting it to a privileged class and concentrating it on small matters. I have taken Rossetti as an example of this class—a man of genius, a man of emotional fervor, but not a comprehensive man. Perhaps it is in his sonnets that the peculiar quality of his feeling is most evident. In their way they are great poetry, but they continually seem inadequate by an indefinable lack of correspondence between the sentiment and general truths. Their power is due largely, setting aside that which results from beauty of musical form and breadth of imagery, to the intense personal feeling which runs through them. A *Hymn to Diana* should be the expression of devoted worship of Diana, but it is elevated by the consciousness that she is only one of a great band under Jove, the all-ruler, who, also, is subject to the silent fates. Still it may be a very beautiful poem if the singer believes for the time being that Diana is the only queen of heaven. Rossetti isolates the "Lady Beauty" and thereby narrows his world-idea. But he worships her with personal intensity of feeling which is real and genuine in him, but in some of his followers is assumed and affected. How well Rossetti understood that personal emotion was the elec-

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tric force which gave the glow to expression is evident in sonnet 61 :

"By thine own tears thy song must tears beget,  
O Singer! Magic mirror thou hast none  
Except thy manifest heart; and save thine own  
Anguish or ardor, else no amulet.  
Cisterned in pride, verse is the feathery jet  
Of soulless air-flung fountains; nay, more dry  
Than the Dead Sea for throats that thirst and sigh,  
That song o'er which no singer's lids grew wet."

Sonnet 77 illustrates his admiration for the beautiful, and how passionate that admiration was :

"Under the arch of Life, when love and death,  
Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw  
Beauty enthroned, and though her gaze struck awe,  
I drew it in as simply as my breath.  
Her's are the eyes which over and beneath  
The sky and sea bend on thee, which can draw  
By sea or sky or woman, to one law,  
The allotted bondman of her song and wreath.

"This is that Lady Beauty, in whose praise  
Thy voice and hand shake still—long known to thee  
By flying hair and fluttering hem—the beat—  
Following her daily—of thy heart and feet,  
How passionately and irretrievably,  
In what fond flight, how many ways and days!"

Rossetti's passion for beauty was a noble emotion. In many of his followers it falls to a petty

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admiration for the apt and delicate, a love for the work of the goldsmith and ornamenteer of china. Such a love cannot be accompanied by true enthusiasm, and verse inspired by bric-à-brac is bric-à-brac itself.

Emotional capacity varies in different individuals from the stolid to the hysterical. We can hardly believe that it varies in different periods of history because it is a constituent element of human nature. But the emotions which are cultivated and expressed are very different in different centuries. Historical events, political and religious struggles, influence them. Besides, there is an unaccountable tone of feeling running through society which changes somewhat as the moods of an individual change. Sometimes men seem to be joyous, enthusiastic, full of eager curiosity; then they seem to be depressed, lethargic, reserved, doubtful of response from their fellows. These moods are reflected in literature, the product of history which reflects the feelings of men. There is apparently a wonderful difference between the literature of the early seventeenth and the later eighteenth century, though both were products of the same race. The literature of the emotional period is the most valuable; in fact, the two can hardly be compared. One is the medium of our spiritual and artistic education, the other a collection of entertaining and interesting documents. We are fortunate in dating our

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Bible and our Book of Common Prayer from an emotional age. That men of later ages have been as humbly and reverentially disposed as were the compilers of our early religious literature we can hardly doubt. But for some reason they have never been able to express themselves with the same fervor. It may be said that the reason why a liturgy cannot be written now is that a liturgy is a slow growth, a survival of the fittest expression of ages. But ours received its final recasting not so much in an age of faith as in an age of emotion, and we are fortunate in hearing this echo from a time when men felt and expressed their feelings. It may be unheeded for many times, but some day in the fervent devotion of the Collects or the Litany we recognize the spirit of man vehemently straining under the bonds of words, and they become no longer a set form, but a living voice. Men can imitate the old phraseology, but the spiritual uplift they cannot reach in these days of measured propriety.

The immense value of emotional fervor is the reason why literature has not improved during the past two hundred and fifty years, while music has. Music depends upon instruments which have been invented and improved. No one is afraid to express his feeling in this form because one does not commit himself to anything definite. Literature depends upon certain elemental feelings which language is as well fitted to express

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at one period as another. The refinement of conditions of life which civilization brings renders men less willing to display those feelings. The complexities and balances of things take up more of their attention, they become a little distrustful of earnestness, for they feel certain that there is much to be said on both sides. Chaucer's philosophy seems to them to be a safe rule of life :

"Pain thee not each crooked to redress,  
In trust of her that turneth as a ball."

"Trust fortune. The grand average will show a slight gain which your puny individual efforts cannot increase or diminish. Why grow excited over injustice? It will wear out just as slowly after you are gone, and to shriek or fume over it only makes one ridiculous."

This explains, too, why the highest literature cannot be bought. Emotion is spontaneous and cannot be commanded. If a man is writing to order, he can do good, honest work, he can even indulge in some imaginative flights, he can polish his phrases and verify his quotations, but he cannot be utterly sincere. He is a professional and must have regard to the prejudices of his audience. Above all, he must not be animated by fixed convictions, for they may be contrary to the opinions of some portion of those he wishes to conciliate. To be very much in earnest a man must be independent. For one who comes be-

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fore the public for pay it would be unbecoming to evince anger or indignation or scorn, or indeed any strong emotion except at some of the public scape-goats. A decorous attitude and a sectarian conscience are expected of the salaried preacher. The salaried writer, too, must be careful what he says. He must assume the "public manners bred by public means" which Shakespeare regrets in his own case. When he has reached a fixed position and can speak with authority and is sure of his audience he may cast off his fetters, but then it is too late. The habit of compromise and reticence is fixed. The convictions of youth are forgotten. He, too, takes Chaucer's advice to

"Spurn not against an al,  
Strive not as doth a crocke with a wall."

He subsides into a general contentment with the order of things, he is not particularly angry nor particularly joyous: he is comfortable. A man like Shakespeare is free to speak only in a romantic and emotional age. A man like Browning must be pecuniarily independent in an age like ours when the note of literature is *point de s'ê*, or he must sacrifice to the present generation "what was meant for mankind." The cheap theatrical pathos of Dickens is readily salable, but there is no market for Shelley's *Adonais* nor

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for Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*. Their authors must look to future generations and be content with the possibility of posthumous fame. It has always been so except in short periods of history. The man who casts a penetrating view into life, on whose soul rests a conviction of the solemnity of things, will never meet with the ready recognition accorded to the man who explains the superficial view of his day. No one felt this more than Dante—the poet of intense emotional power, the representative of moral passion—who was in his own day held secondary to some courtly minstrel whose name is now forgotten. But this very intensity, this consuming flame of his soul, so ardent that we wonder how he could have retained sanity, is one of the qualities that make his work so great. If we painfully translate a page, we draw our breath, saying, "this is literature." If we read a translation we find that the peculiar quality of expressing emotion is utterly lost. The English words are stiff, unreal, contorted, powerless. The meaning has been transferred from one page to another, but the power of arousing and expressing feeling has been left behind. Emotion is so peculiarly a personal matter that it cannot be translated. It is the part of us that feels that is immortal, if any part is, and the art product inspired by feeling partakes of the immortality of its source.

It will be found that the note of shallow emo-

tion lowers the tone of any literary production more than any other one defect. A false philosophy may be pardoned, sketchy and weak character-drawing may be overlooked, a rough unfinished music has a manly character, but false feeling is fatal. When Moore in one of his songs, after lamenting the loss of the friends of his youth rather gracefully, concludes :

"I feel like one who treads alone  
Some banquet hall deserted,  
Whose lights are fled,  
Whose garlands dead,  
And all but him departed,"

we say, unconsciously, "Great Heavens! is that the way you look on life? In calling up the remembrance of youth do you experience only the regret that might come over a man re-entering a banquet hall? If, in your estimation the two reminiscences are in any way parallel or comparable, your interpretation of life is unpleasant. If the figure is merely an unmeaning bit of decoration, you are an insincere artist."

Affectation or the expression of feeling one does not experience is simply falsehood, and thereby repulsive. Error and prejudice are frequently very attractive because they are honestly entertained, but pretence is hateful to gods and men. It is hard to dislike Falstaff, he is so honest in his wickedness. In fact, we may as

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well admit that we like him. He makes no pretence whatever to any higher standard, and escapes the damnation of the hypocrite. In literature, sincerity or adequate relation between feeling and expression is the note of the best work. Euphuism is not displeasing, although it is not earnest, because no pretence to earnestness is made. Sentimentalism is repulsive, for it assumes certain feelings which are evidently not the proper mood of the mind under the given circumstances. This is such a deadly sin that it cannot be exemplified from the pages of the real poets. Byron is guilty of it sometimes. The despair of his heroes is evidently theatrical. The gay diabolism of Don Juan is preferable to the set sneer of Childe Harold, for it is natural. Instances of sentimentalism are frequent in the lesser poets—Mrs. Barbauld, Motherwell, Bulwer, Owen Meredith—and in many ephemeral prose writers. They cheat us for a while, then we grow tired of them.

Emotional susceptibility alone is of little value. It needs the artistic power of musical expression, the power of conceiving character, a sane philosophy of life, and the power of grasping a unity in the mind to render it effective. When these powers are evenly balanced we have the true artist in literature. These powers are incommunicable and non-hereditary. Such a perfect balance as marks the great artist can occur very

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rarely, perhaps but once or twice in the life of a nation.

At the same time the constitution of human nature is such that poets must appear. All men desire to live. From this results the struggle for life, the ceaseless activity of living things. But most men desire more. They desire to know. If the struggle for life is the animating spirit of business, the desire to know is the inspiration of science. But men desire still more, they desire to understand. This desire makes poetry and ethics, and, in the large sense, religion, necessary to healthy social life. This desire sometimes conquers the desire to live, and in the poets this desire is stronger than both the others. They have no message to the few whose horizon is bounded by the desire to live—the mere men of business—nor to the few whose spiritual needs are limited by the desire to know—the mere men of science—even if it be the science of literature. They announce the moral laws. They are not content to say of the world simply, "it is," nor of men simply, "they are." Existence is a fact, and so is the law of gravitation, but both must have some background. Perhaps this background is such that existence and the law of gravitation must be—perhaps it is not. Philosophers build theories on either hypothesis. Both rest in conjecture. But one thing at least is certain. The really important relation of men to each other

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and to nature is an emotional one, not an intellectual nor a material one. It is the only relation on which substantial happiness is based, and the only one which leads to any comprehension, any understanding that will not be set aside by death.

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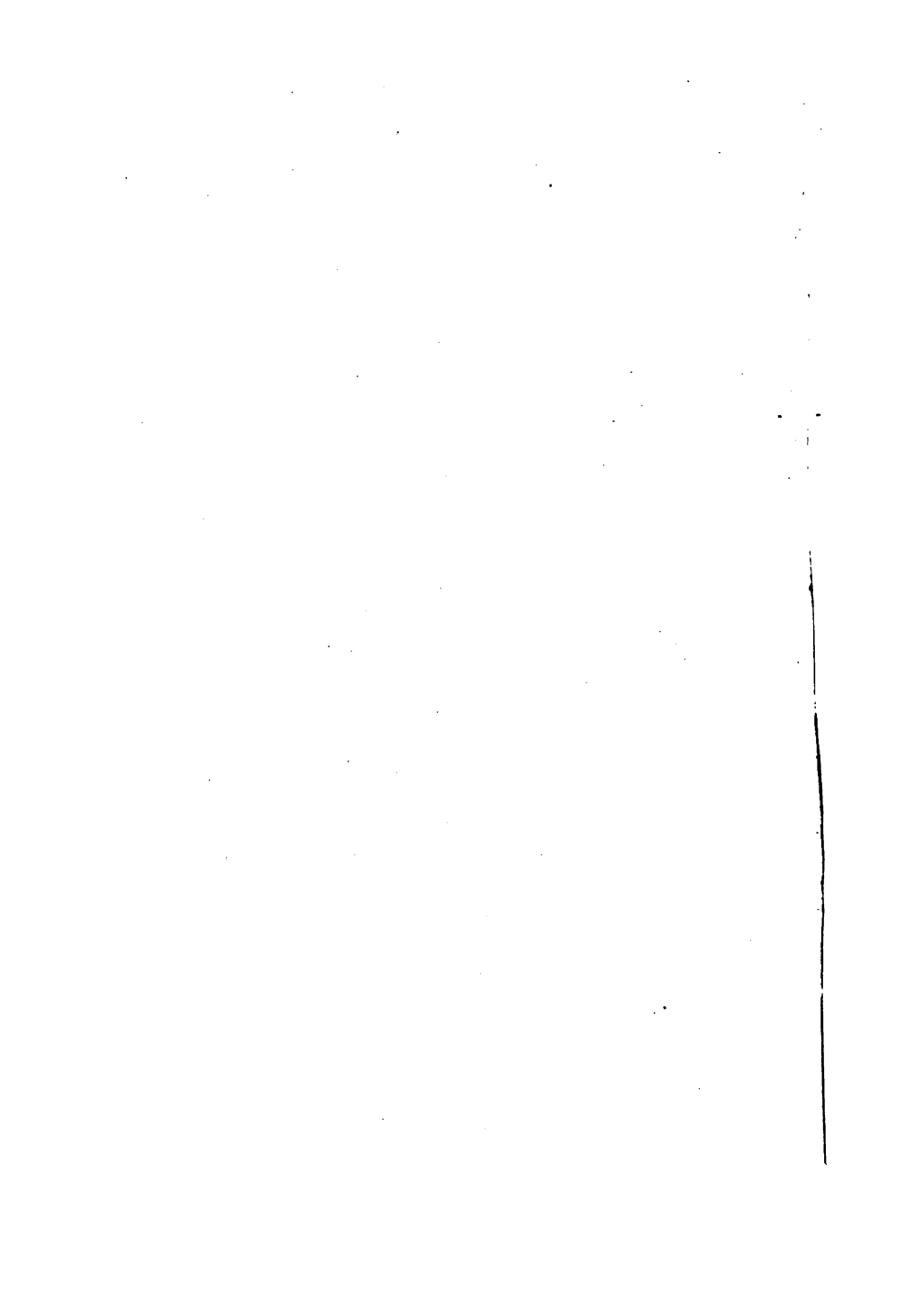
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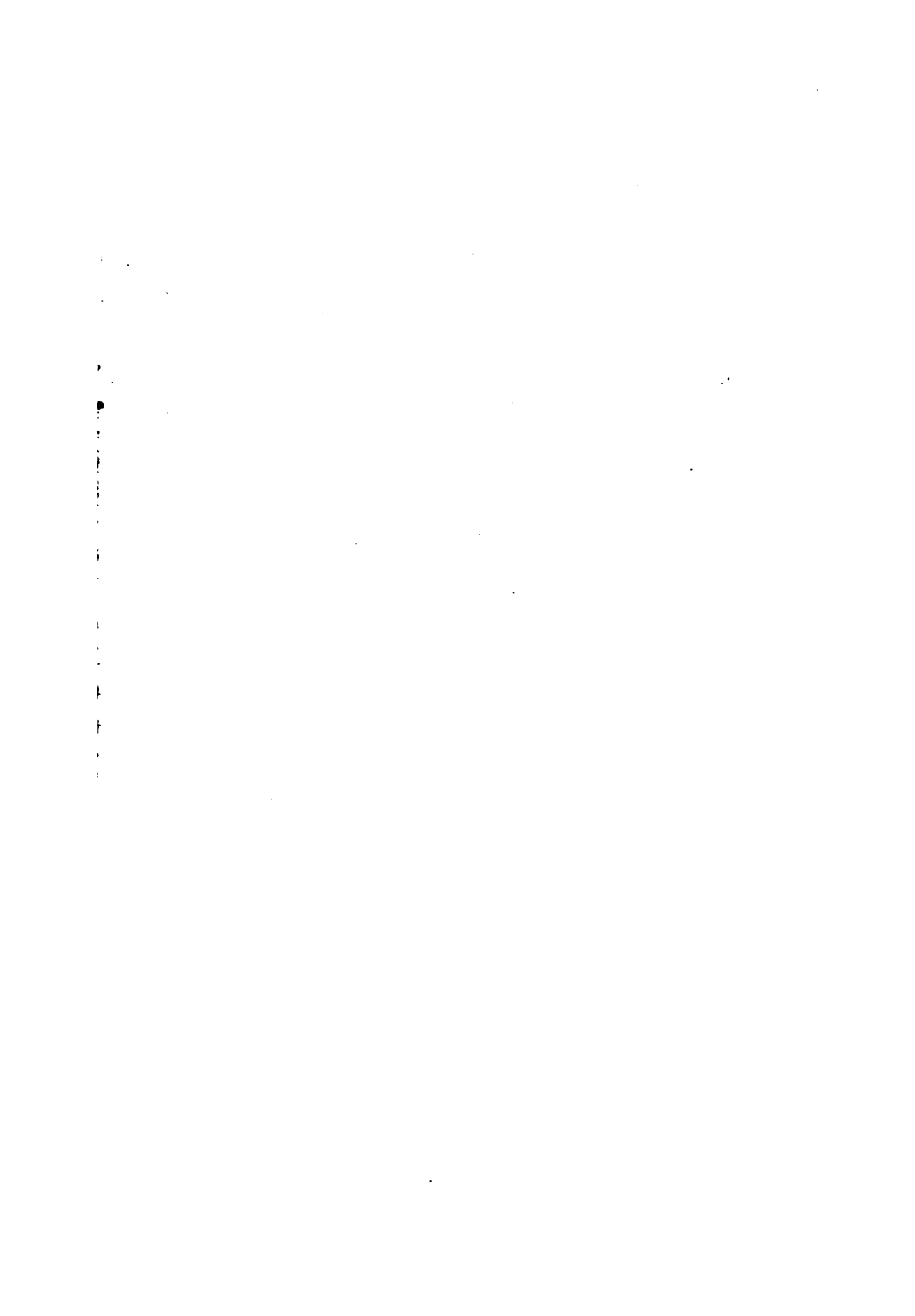
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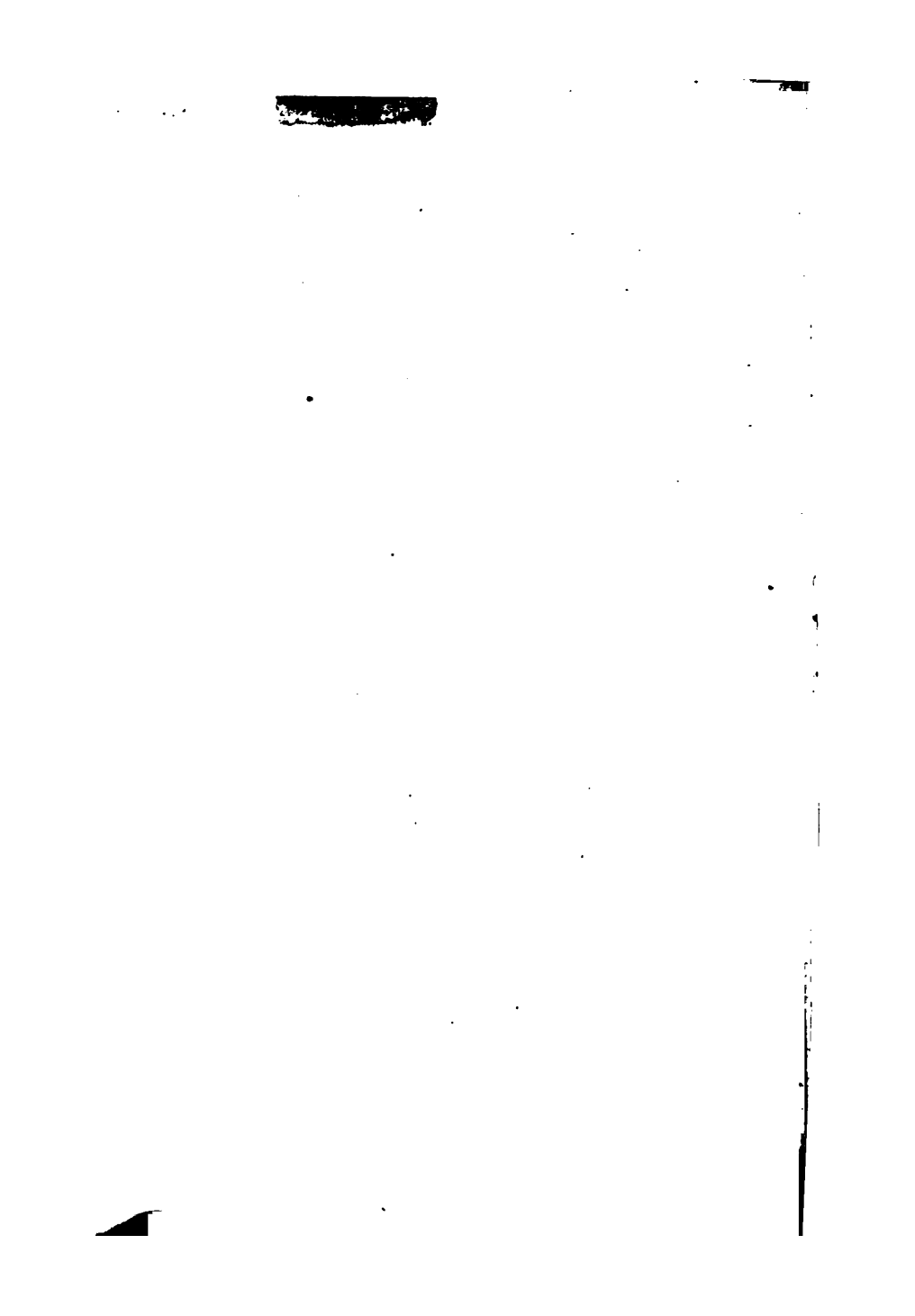












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